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The Christ Has Come.

E. HAMPDEN-COOK, M.A.

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THE CHRIST HAS COME.

The Second Advent an Event of the Past.

AN APPEAL FROM HUMAN TRADITION TO THE TEACHING OF JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES.

BY

Ernest E. HAMPDEN-COOK, M.A.,

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE; B.A., LONDON.

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The Author

καθηγητὴς ὑμῶν ἐστὶν εἷς ὁ Χριστός. πάντες δὲ ὑμεῖς ἀδελφοί ἐστε.—*Matt. xxiii. 8, 10.*

πᾶς ὁ προάγων καὶ μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει. ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ, οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει.—*2 John 9.*

Affectionately dedicated

TO

JAMES STUART RUSSELL, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF

"THE PAROUSIA."

"Even now, after eighteen centuries of Christianity, we may be involved in some tremendous error, of which the Christianity of the future will make us ashamed."—*Vinet.*

"The outward and visible signs which were immediately to precede the appearance of the Son of man in heaven have long ago been accomplished. All these things had their place in the external history of the world, and they are known to us through contemporary historians. What happened in the invisible and eternal world immediately after the tribulation of those days is known to us through these words of Christ, as far as can be made known to us in earthly symbols. To use His own words, 'He came in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.'"—*R. W. Dale.*

"It was to this event, the most awful in history (the destruction of Jerusalem) that we must apply those prophecies of Christ's coming in which every one of the apostles and evangelists describe it as *near at hand.* To those prophecies our Lord Himself fixed these three most definite limitations—the one, that before that generation passed away all these things would be fulfilled; another that some standing there should not taste death till they saw the Son of man coming in His Kingdom; the third that the apostles should not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come. It is strange that these distinct limitations should not be regarded as a decisive proof that *the fall of Jerusalem was in the fullest sense the second advent of the Son of man* which was primarily contemplated by the earliest voices of prophecy."—F. W. Farrar, *Early Days of Christianity:* Bk. v., ch. 29.

"Brethren, we are now quickly to part from one another, and whether I may ever live to see your face on earth any more, the God of Heaven only knows; but whether the Lord hath appointed that or no, I charge you before God and His blessed angels, that you follow me no further than ye have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

If God reveal anything to you by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as ever ye were to receive any truth by my Ministry; for I am verily persuaded, I am very confident, the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of His holy word. For my part I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the Reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go at present no further than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans can't be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw, what ever part of His will our good God has revealed to Calvin, they will die rather than embrace it. And the Calvinists, ye see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things.

This is a Misery much to be lamented, for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God; but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace further light as that which they first received. *I beseech you remember it, 'tis an article of your Church covenant. That ye be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written word of God.* Remember that, and every other article of your sacred covenant. But I must herewithal exhort you to take heed what ye receive as truth."—*From the Farewell Charge to the Plymouth Pilgrims, by their Pastor John Robinson.* (Neal's History of New England, vol. i., p. 84.)

"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should *bear witness unto the truth.* . . . *If ye abide in My word,* then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—*Jesus Christ.*

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

This book has been issued as a humble contribution to the cause of truth and of social and practical Christianity. Two thousand copies are already in circulation. The demand for a second edition is gratifying as an indication of the deep and wide-spread interest which is being awakened in the great subject of the past Second advent. The author tenders his thanks to the many critics who have reviewed the book in the newspaper press and elsewhere. He also avails himself of the present opportunity briefly to re-state certain points in the argument, and to endeavour to answer certain objections.

The Christ Has Come is an appeal on the one hand to undoubted facts, and on the other hand to a reasonable Christian faith. The Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament are not poetry, but plain, practical prose. Common-sense, therefore, requires that their language should be interpreted not indeed literally, but in accordance with the usages of every-day life. Not a few of the unhappy divisions of Christendom may be directly traced to the neglect of this principle. For endless diversity of religious opinion has arisen, because, by processes of 'allegorising' and 'spiritualising,' men have found it possible to explain away whatever ran counter to their own beliefs, and to read into Scripture almost any meaning which fancy or prejudice may have suggested. Systems of 'double' interpretation, and of 'partial' and 'complete' fulfilments, have been at once the delight and the shame of traditional theology. It is surely time for such systems to be renounced, as being utterly foreign to the real meaning and intention of the original speakers or writers. 'Far be it from us to make God speak with two tongues, or to attach a variety of senses to His word, in which we ought rather to behold the simplicity of its divine author reflected as in a clear mirror.'*

*Maresius.

History, of course, is constantly repeating itself, and great events may present a striking analogy to one another. Yet, although the illustrations of a passage of scripture may be many, the meaning intended to be conveyed by it is in every case direct and simple. 'The judgment of Babylon, or Nineveh, or Jerusalem, may be a type of every other similar judgment, and is a warning to all nations and ages. But this is very different from saying that the language in which that judgment was predicted was fulfilled only partially when Babylon, or Nineveh, or Jerusalem fell, and is yet awaiting its complete fulfilment.'[1] 'Scripture, like other books, has one meaning—[that] which it had to the mind of the prophet or evangelist who first uttered or wrote it to the hearers or readers who first received it. [This meaning] is to be gathered from [the Scripture] itself without reference to the adaptations of fathers or divines, and without regard to *a priori* notions about its nature and origin. The office of the interpreter is not to add another [signification], but to recover the original one: the meaning, that is, of the words as they struck on the ears—or flashed before the eyes—of those, who first heard and read them.'[2] Now, unless words do not mean what they say, it is certain that not only in the Apocalypse and the Epistles, but also in the Gospels, the second coming of Jesus had narrow limitations of time assigned to it. These coincide unmistakably with the winding up of the Jewish age at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The New Testament writers were entirely of one mind as to the speedy advent of the heavenly King and the heavenly kingdom. In the four gospels Christ's own predictions on the subject are numerous and emphatic, and are expressed in great variety of language. The words attributed to Him are free from all ambiguity. To deny (as some do) that His utterances are correctly reported is to strike a fatal blow at the integrity of the Gospel records, and to make it uncertain what His real teaching on any subject was.

[1] Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 385.
[2] Jowett, *Interpretation of Scripture*, § 1. 3, 4.

Therefore, to begin with, the following pages call attention to the undoubted fact that throughout the New Testament the Second advent is represented as an event which 1860 years ago was near at hand. If the New Testament records are trustworthy it is certain that this was the teaching not only of the apostles but also of Jesus Christ. On such lofty and unimpeachable authority we may reasonably believe that the event took place within the time previously specified for its accomplishment.

This faith does not rest merely on the divinity of Jesus. What appears to be a just and rational view of the great eschatological discourse recorded in Matt. xxiv., Mark xiii., Luke xxi., may be illustrated as follows. Suppose that thirty or forty years ago a man claiming to be a teacher sent by God had predicted a series of events which were to happen about the present time in some country remote from our own, and with which we have few means of communication. The news now comes to us that very many of his predictions have been strikingly realised. *This would at once establish the fact of his superhuman foresight.* But when we ask whether on a certain occasion he himself was present and was seen, the country is so remote from our own, and our means of communication are so few, that the sources of our information fail us—we cannot obtain any sort of an answer to our enquiry. Under such circumstances the fact that very many of the predictions had been realised would make it an act of perfectly reasonable faith to believe that they had all been realised.

The Silence of History.—In Chapter IV. certain facts are emphasised which throw light upon the absence of historical proof of the past Second advent. Stupendous as is the admitted character of the event, there is much in the New Testament to indicate its secrecy and its restriction to a limited number of persons on whom alone were bestowed the faculties competent to take cognizance of it. It is in the highest degree unlikely that men ever have gazed, or ever will gaze, with ordinary

mortal eyes upon the unveiled glory of the risen Jesus. As Saul, the persecutor, journeyed to Damascus the light which shone upon him from heaven blinded him. It had a brightness above that of the noon-day sun and he could not see for the glory of that light (Acts ix. 8; xxii. 2; xxvi. 13). "Faint indeed would be the splendour of Christ's divine appearance, and dim the lustre of His glorious advent, were it a splendour of which the perception could be borne—or a lustre of which a glimpse could be caught—by any terrestrial eye! An appeal to the [ordinary] senses, or to history founded on information through them, would be an appeal to evidence perfectly incompetent."*

And even if it were otherwise, to disbelieve in the past Parousia because of the lack of historical proof would not be as reasonable as at first sight it might appear to be. Dr. Stuart Russell, speaking of the translation of the living saints more particularly as it concerned the land of Palestine, has said:

"We have to consider the peculiar circumstances of the time, of the country, and of the people as they then existed. We are apt to measure things by the standard of our own time, and of our own experience, and to suppose that the same rule will apply to all times and circumstances. We naturally enough say, 'were such an event as the sudden and simultaneous disappearance of a number of prominent persons from our town, or village, or neighbourhood, to take place, what a sensation it would cause, what alarm and consternation. It would be reported all over the land, it would be the topic of conversation in every company.' Very true; but suppose all this occurred when the country was in the occupation of a foreign army, when the invaders were marching through the land, leaving devastation and ruin everywhere in their track. Suppose the metropolis in a state of siege, captured, burnt to the ground; fire, famine and slaughter raging in every quarter; all social order convulsed amid the agonies of an expiring nation. What sensation would the disappearance of some of the members of a despised sect excite in such circumstances? Would they be missed? Or if missed would it be thought unaccountable? Amidst the fearful signs and portents of that tremendous crisis the disappearance of the Christians might easily pass without notice."

Outside of Palestine the early Christian Church was an obscure sect, consisting mainly of women, and of slaves, and of the poor. In the sight of God these were of priceless worth, but if, amid the terrific confusions and convulsions of the almost uninterrupted wars which characterised that age, the most

*J. A. Stephenson, *Christology*, vol. ii., p. 132.

saintly of them were suddenly missing from their homes, we may be sure that their disappearance was little regarded or mourned by the world. Yet in the mysterious hiatus of 70 A.D. to 150 A.D. it has left an indelible mark upon the records of the church.

In some cases the demand for historical proof of the past Second advent proceeds from a misconception of the real nature of history, and is based on the unwarrantable assumption that, from the creation onwards, God in His providence has appointed means for the systematic chronicling of all great events, and for the careful preservation of the records. In reality, very much of the world's story has never been written; innumerable records of human affairs have accidentally perished by fire and from other causes; innumerable records have been intentionally destroyed through the folly or bigotry of the persons into whose hands they fell. All history, indeed—and especially ancient history—is more or less accidental in origin, and extremely fragmentary in character. Often it has been penned with a partisan object in view, and for this and other reasons is strongly biased. In any case it embodies a mere selection of events strung together at the fancy or caprice of the individual writers. As Macaulay* has naïvely remarked, "By judicious selection, rejection and arrangement [a perfect historian] gives to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction . . . In [a perfect historian's] narrative a due subordination is observed—some transactions are prominent, others retire." Certain it is that few historians have been content to tell the truth, *the whole truth* and nothing but the truth, even to the extent to which it has lain in their power so to do. In considering the question of the coming of Jesus in 70 A.D. we have to remember that Josephus was a writer who was far from being pre-disposed to favour Christianity. Instead of demanding, as some do, that the solemn event (if it occurred then) should have been recorded in his history, we ought rather

*quoted by Bagehot, *Literary Studies*, vol. ii., p. 242.

to marvel that, in spite of his bias against his own nation and against the Christian Church, his pages afford such striking evidence of the historical verification of many of the predictions contained in the Apocalypse and the Gospels.

The Millennium.—It is commonly supposed that the "Millennium" or Kingdom of God is still entirely future, and will be visible and earthly in character. The belief contended for in the following pages that it is an unseen and (as the name "Kingdom of heaven" implies) *heavenly* sovereignty which has been in existence ever since 70 A.D. is repugnant to many Christians. Yet, as has been well said by an able writer:

"Let us not forget that once in the Church's history it was the common belief that John's 1000 years were gone. Dorner bears witness that the Church up to Constantine understood by Antichrist chiefly the heathen state, and to some extent unbelieving Judaism (System iv., 390). Victorinus, a bishop martyred in 303, reckoned the 1000 years from the birth of Christ. Augustine wrote his *magnum opus* 'the City of God' with a sort of dim perception of the identity of the Christian Church with the new Jerusalem. Indeed we know that the 1000 years were held to be running by the generations previous to that date, and so intense was their faith that the universal Church was in a ferment of excitement about and shortly after 1000 A.D. in expectation of the outbreak of Satanic influence. Wickliff, the reformer, believed that Satan had been unbound at the end of the 1000 years, and was intensely active in his day. That this period in Church history is past, or now runs its course, has been the belief of a roll of eminent men too long to be chronicled on our page—of Augustine, Luther, Bossuet, Cocceius, Grotius, Hammond, Hengstenberg, Keil, Moses Stuart, Philippi, Maurice."*

The fact is that bad as the world still is, yet morally it is a vastly better world than it was when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. It is said for example that at the present time there are not anywhere on the earth outside of Christendom ten square miles where the life of a man or the honour of a woman is safe. But this, which is now true of only part of the world, was probably true 1,860 years ago, of the whole world. Few people in these days have any adequate conception of the misery and degradation which were then the common lot of almost all mankind, owing to the monstrous wickedness of the times, to continual war, and to the cruelties of political despotism, and of the everywhere-prevailing slavery. In Rom.

*Alexander Brown, *Great Day of the Lord*, p. 216.

i. 26-32, the Apostle Paul gives a terrible picture of the condition of things which prevailed throughout the Roman empire. Secular history fully bears out his statements, and proves that that empire perished from sheer vice! Life on this earth was then, to the great mass of humanity, the unspeakably sad and hopeless thing which to-day, happily, it is to only an ever-decreasing number of people.

"Perceiv'st thou not the change of day?
Ah, carry back thy ken!
What, some two thousand years! Survey
The world as it was then!

"Like ours it look'd in outward air.
Its head was clear and true,
Sumptuous its clothing, rich its fare,
No pause its action knew.

"Stout was its arm, each thew and bone
Seemed puissant and alive—
But, ah, its heart, its heart was stone,
And so it could not thrive!

"On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell.
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell."*

"Oh, if only we lived for a decade under those old heathen heavens of Persia, Greece or Rome, peopled with their wicked, quarrelsome, licentious deities, until we felt the curse of them aright; and were then brought from under their gloomy terrors into the bright and happy sky of Christian faith, we should know whether or not a new heaven has been created. Does the reader know what sort of earth was that old Roman world in which the Apostles shed their blood? Conceive of an empire in which there were 60,000,000 slaves—where infanticide was practised even by wealthy families—where human sacrifices were offered to the gods—where emperors were deified—where suicide was counted virtuous—where fornication and adultery were religious rites—where men were kept to fight with swords, and prisoners were thrown to lions for public sport—where the poor man had no rights nor

*Matthew Arnold, *Obermann once more.*

charities—where almost all the rich were dissolute and princes almost all oppressive! We say, look upon that world and then—

'How soon a smile of God can change the world!'

look at the world which Christianity has created, and with all its shortcomings acknowledged, tell us if, thank God, we are not living in a new earth to day."

"We are so accustomed to magnify the evil in the world that we forget to give God thanks for the evils which His Gospel has extirpated. One may well exclaim in the eloquent language of Farrar:—'What need to tell you again how it purified a society which was rotten through and through with lust and hate, how it rescued the gladiator, how it emancipated the slave, how it elevated manhood, how it flung over childhood the ægis of its protection, how it converted the wild, fierce tribes from the icy steppes and broad rivers of the North, how it built from the shattered fragments of the Roman Empire a new-created world, how it saved learning, how it baptized and recreated art, how it inspired music, how it placed the poor and sick under the angel-wings of mercy and entrusted to the two great archangels of reason and conscience the guidance of the young!'"*

"High cause had they at Bethlehem, that night
To lift the curtain of Hope's hidden light,
To break decree of silence with Love's cry,
Foreseeing how this babe, born lowlily,
Should—*past dispute, since now achieved is this*—
Bring Earth great gifts of blessing and of bliss;
Date, from that crib, the Dynasty of Love;
Strip his misusëd thunderbolts from Jove;
Bend to their knees Rome's Cæsars; break the chain
From the slave's neck; set sick hearts free again,
Bitterly bound by priests, and scribes, and scrolls;
And heal, with balm of pardon, sinking souls;
Should Mercy to her vacant throne restore,
Teach Right to Kings, and Patience to the Poor;
Should by His sweet name all names overthrow,
And by His lovely words, the quick seeds sow
Of golden equities, and brotherhood,
Of Pity, Peace, and gentle praise of good;
Of knightly honour, holding life in trust
For God, and Lord, and all things pure and just;
Lowly to Woman; for Maid Mary's sake
Lifting our sister from the dust, to take
In homes her equal place, the household's Queen,

*Alexander Brown, *Great Day of the Lord*, pp. 217, 231.

Crowned and august, who sport and thrall had been!
Of arts adorning life, of Charities
Gracious and wide, because the impartial skies
Roof one race in; and poor, weak, mean, oppressed,
Are children of one bounteous Mother's breast,
One Father's care: emancipating man,
Should, from that bearing cave, outside the Khân,
Amid the kneeling cattle, rise and be
Light of all lands, and splendour of each sea,
The Sun-burst of a new Morn come to Earth,
Not yet, alas! broad Day, but Day's white birth
Which promiseth; and blesseth, promising."*

This earth of ours is *a new world* compared with what it was two thousand years ago. Let anyone who doubts it read C. L. Brace's *Gesta Christi*, or Dr. R. S. Storrs' *Divine Origin of Christianity indicated by its historical effects*. Whence has come the change for the better? There can be no reasonable doubt that it is largely due to the fact that the supreme spiritual influence which has been at work in men's hearts and lives during that long period has been the influence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament plainly teaches that His resurrection from the dead carried with it a great victory for humanity over evil, and introduced into the world a new moral and spiritual force (Phil. iii 10; Rom. viii. 2). One reason why the Son of God had clothed Himself with flesh and blood was that, through death, He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. ii. 14). "For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (Rom. xiv. 9). Accordingly at His ascension He sat down at the right hand of God (Eph. i. 20-22), *all authority in heaven and over the earth* having then been given to Him (Matt. xxviii. 18). In 70 A.D. the heavenly Kingdom was fully established over the earth. For it was then that the

*Sir Edwin Arnold, *The Light of the World*. Inserted by permission of the author.

ringleader of evil was cast into the abyss, and the saints began to reign with Christ.

A recent author, speaking of the power which the glorified saints of God exert over the world, has said,

"Little as we think it, the world's best work is done, in the main, by these unseen workers. They who seem to do it, the visible agents, are but the channels of unsuspected influences. It is the Christ and those who bear Him company who really regulate the events of Time. To us, in the midst of the tumult and the struggle, it may seem as though all depended upon ourselves. So, too, to the soldier, in the confusion of the battle, it may seem as though the victory were dependent on his courage. But here, as elsewhere, the appearance is deceptive. It is the commander who secures success. The aides-de-camp who bear his orders from post to post, through the fluctuating conflict, these are they who know the secret—it is these who are the commander's best auxiliaries. So, too, Christ's aides-de-camp in His agelong warfare—unseen, perhaps unnoticed by the troops whom they direct—yet inspire the leaders and prepare the victory. Each soldier has his own attendants—the armies of earth have their counterpart in heaven. No individual is left alone; for each there are those told off to help him. Each, in so far as he fights God's battle, is upheld and encouraged by these unseen friends."*

The people who are alive on the earth at any given time, form only the thin outer rind, or husk of humanity. The great majority of the human race are in the unseen world. Our contention is that the "Millennium," or Kingdom of God, denotes the now-existing sovereignty of Christ and His saints not merely over the earth, but also over all mankind who are in the unseen world; and that there the patience of immortal love out-wearying human sin is, by means of this sovereignty, causing the victory of good over evil to proceed *pari passu* with the same slow but sure victory in this world. The term Millennium itself is derived exclusively from the "thousand years" of Rev. xx. There is absolutely no scriptural foundation for the popular fancy which identifies it with a time of perfect earthly peace, innocence and bliss. Nowhere do the Scriptures teach that when the Christ should become King all sin and sorrow would immediately cease. On the contrary, the very purpose for which His Kingdom exists is the gradual diminution and extinction of evil. He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. And as soon as this is accomplished

*C. A. Goodhart, *Our Lord's Promise to Nathaniel*, p. 21.

the *raison d'être* of His Kingdom ceases, and He surrenders the sovereignty to God—even the Father (I. Cor. xv. 24, 25).

Why should it be deemed incredible or absurd that the "Millennium" or "thousand years" of Rev. xx. denotes a constantly-improving condition of things, rather than a state of realised earthly perfection? *All Christians believe in the good time that is yet to be.* Most speak of this good time as the Millennium, and expect it to be inaugurated by the Lord's Second advent. But with far better scriptural warrant, we may call it "the new heaven and the new earth" (Rev. xxi. 1), and may believe that it will be inaugurated by Christ's Third advent, when, having put all His enemies under His feet, He will surrender the now-existing Kingdom to God—even the Father; that God may be all in all. If this view be correct, human history is simply *a step further advanced* than is commonly supposed. In that case the gain is great.

"The Blessed Hope."—The suggestion urged by many, that if the Second advent took place in 70 A.D., the best and brightest hope of the Christian Church vanishes, is an entirely mistaken suggestion. The hope of the Church in every age has been to attain to the beatific vision of God—transformation into the perfect likeness of Christ and deliverance from all evil, and a share in the Redeemer's sovereignty over the whole human race, both here and in the unseen world. What difficulty or danger is there in believing that this hope has been destined to be realised by different portions of the Church at different times and in successive stages? The Old Testament saints and the saints of the primitive Church entered the heavenly kingdom at the coming of the King in 70 A.D. Then, for the first time in the history of the world, the spirits of just men were made perfect, and the fully-prepared home in heaven was thrown open to all truly Christ-like sons of earth. A peculiar blessedness has belonged to those who have died in the Lord *from that time onward* (Rev. xiv. 13). In their case there has

has been no delay. At death they have been delivered from all evil, and have attained at once to the beatific vision of God, and to a share in Christ's universal sovereignty.

The past Second advent destructive of "the blessed hope"! No suggestion can be more false or misleading. In reality the belief contended for in the following pages strengthens the blessed hope and brings it nearer and causes it to burn more brightly. If the second coming of the Son of man is still future, then of all earth's sin-stricken, sorrowing myriads, not a single individual has yet attained to the rest and the inheritance which belong to the people of God. In that case it will be vain to resist the inevitable conclusion that the promises of the Lord Jesus were not fulfilled within the narrow limitations of time which He Himself had expressly assigned to them. At this the true believer cannot fail to be filled with distress and misgiving. For some inscrutably mysterious reason the redemption of prophets, saints and martyrs which Jesus and the apostles long ages ago declared to be then near at hand has already tarried for nearly two thousand years. In that case, for aught we know to the contrary, it may tarry for two thousand years longer.

But if, as we confidently believe, the Second advent took place within the narrow limitations of time assigned to it by Christ Himself, then, in 70 A.D., the Old Testament saints and the saints of the primitive Church entered into the joy of their Lord and shared to the utmost in the twofold victory which He, as man and on man's behalf, had, at His resurrection, gained over the grave and over all the powers of evil. In every succeeding age His faithful people have attained at death to the same great joy and the same perfect deliverance. And if, when the summons comes to us, we are found to be living prayerful and consecrated lives, we also shall go at once to share His glory and to have bestowed on us a crown of life and of gladness. This may happen at any moment. In any case there is no possibility of a long delay, for the past Second advent has

brought that glory and that crown very near to us. Heaven is now ready for all who at death are ready for heaven!

The Scriptures.—It has sometimes been asserted that if the Second advent is past, it deprives us of our share in the Bible and in the promises of God. The statement is based on a curious misconception of the facts of the case. Is fulfilled prophecy worthless? Is not the past a great revelation of God and of human nature, and as such has it not deep and eternal significance? Or is history mere waste paper simply because it relates to the past and not to the future? In reality the record which the Scriptures embody of God's dealings with His ancient people the Jews from the call of Abraham down to their destruction as a settled nation constitutes *a stupendous object-lesson* for all succeeding generations. It reveals a God who in His severity towards sin, His compassion to the sinner, and His mercy to the penitent, is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. To the end of time it makes sure to the humblest believer the living presence and the undying sympathy and love of the risen and triumphant Christ. Need any man be spiritually poor and destitute, who by personal experiment can find out for himself the truth of this? Surely not.

The Bible did not come only yesterday straight from heaven, but like other ancient books it has had a history, and originated at periods of time and under circumstances far remote from our own. With effects disastrous to the intelligibility and credibility of the book this simple and obvious fact has been persistently ignored by Christian people. It will not be a loss but an immeasurable gain when for the supposed unchangeable book we substitute the really unchangeable God. Each ancient promise will then be recognised as part of a revelation of God's heart and character. In applying the promise to ourselves we shall need to make allowances for differences of time and circumstances—as we already do in the case of many Old Testament promises. But since God is still God and we are human beings, and the promise was part of a

revelation of God's disposition towards His creature, man, the spirit of the promise will for ever hold good, and will avail for our comfort and encouragement.

July 1895. E. H. C.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

The belief that the second coming of the Son of man is still future cannot be reconciled with any reasonable interpretation of the New Testament as a divinely-inspired message and record. The error is none the less an error because for centuries it has remained undetected. *The truth which must sooner or later supersede it formed part of the most ancient faith of the Christian church.* The most ancient faith of the Christian church associated together the destruction of Jerusalem, the winding up of the Jewish dispensation, and a personal return of Christ to the earth, as events which were certain to happen at one and the same time. Jesus and His apostles believed and taught that the Second advent would take place in the lifetime of some who had been His earthly contemporaries. Confident that the founders of Christianity were neither deceived nor mistaken, we joyfully accept on their authority the fact that the Christ has already come the second time.

Throughout the following pages the author is under the deepest obligations to Dr. Stuart Russell's "The Parousia." He also owes much to "The Berean" by John Humphrey Noyes, and to the works of Henry Dunn, the author of "The Destiny of the Human Race."

February 1894. E. H. C.

CHAPTER I.

Introduction.

Revelation has been progressive. — In the present day, the *novelty* of a scientific theory does not prevent its acceptance; for every one now recognises the slowness with which the secrets of the world of nature have been unveiled to men's eyes. Electricity, for example, although a modern discovery, has been a fact ever since the creation. Equally gradual has been God's revelation of Himself, culminating in that full manifestation of His self-sacrificing love, which came through His Son Jesus Christ. The Bible is the record of that gradual revelation. In Old Testament times, men lived in much spiritual darkness, and the thoughts which they cherished as to the great Creator are now seen to have been imperfect. Even prophets and psalmists apparently had but a rudimentary knowledge of many truths which were afterwards brought to the full light of day by Jesus and His apostles; such, for instance, as that of a future life.

Our Lord told His disciples : "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see ; for I say unto you that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not ; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not." (Luke x. 23, 24.) He brought life and immortality to light (2 Tim. i. 10), and uttered things kept secret from the foundation of the world (Matt. xiii. 35). And the apostle Paul repeatedly speaks of certain great truths ("mysteries," he calls them), now clearly revealed, which had previously been hidden and unknown from the beginning of human history.*

Man's understanding of the Bible progressive also.—And not only was God's revelation of Himself, of which the Scriptures are a record—a gradual and progressive one, but man's understanding of the record and the revelation has been gradual and progressive also. No one generation can claim to have mastered the varied and complex contents of the Bible, or to have fully ascertained and understood its meaning. Theological doctrines are efforts to harmonise and explain the multitudinous facts of Scripture, just as scientific theories are efforts to harmonise and ex-

* "The mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested" (Rom. xvi. 25) ; "the mystery which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of man, as it hath now been revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit" (Eph. iii. 5) ; "the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations, but now hath it been manifested to His saints" (Col. i. 26). Compare 1 Cor. ii. 7-9, iv. 1., xv. 51.

plain the multitudinous facts of the world of nature. Unfortunately, however, alike in science and in religion, men's conceptions of truth often differ from the truth itself. Few, if any, theological doctrines or scientific theories can be accepted as absolutely final, for, at any moment, fresh discoveries bearing on the subject may be made, or some better explanation of the facts concerned be forthcoming. The disinterested love of truth therefore demands that theological doctrines, being, as they are for the most part, merely *human and uninspired inferences* from the inspired statements of Scripture, should always be open to revision and correction equally with the theories of science. It need not, therefore, be deemed incredible if, on re-examination, it should prove true that the doctrine of Christ's second advent, as—for ages—it has been usually held, is nevertheless one that stands to-day in urgent need of revision and radical correction.

The fact that popular anticipations as to certain prophecies are unrealised is not always an indication that the prophecies themselves remain unfulfilled. For example, popular anticipations as to the second Elijah were disappointed, for we have divine authority for asserting that John the Baptist was he. "*This is he*," said Jesus, "this is Elijah which was for to come." "Elijah is come already" (Matt. xi. 10, 14; xvii. 12; Luke vii. 27). Yet his contemporaries did not recognise the truth of

the matter. "*They knew him not*, but did unto him whatsoever they listed." And our Lord Himself, when He came to suffer and to die for sins not His own, grievously disappointed the anticipations of His countrymen, learned and unlearned alike; so that the Jews, in that and every subsequent age, have been terribly mistaken in regarding the first advent of God's Messiah as an event which has not yet been realised, but is beyond all question still future. "Unto this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart" (2 Cor. iii. 15).

A candid consideration of the evidence will convince many that, for ages, a similar misconception has prevailed within the Christian Church as to the second coming of the Messiah; a veil having lain upon men's hearts whenever the New Testament is read, which has caused them to regard this event as one which has not yet been realised, but is beyond all question still in the future. The following pages constitute an appeal from human tradition to the clear teaching of Jesus and His inspired apostles. The result of that appeal, however unwelcome to some, will be found to involve the belief that our Lord's second coming is now not future but past; that unknown to the world at large and contrary to the popular ideas that have been current on the subject ever since, He personally returned to the earth immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., being actually

seen on the clouds of heaven, not only in Palestine but also in swift succession throughout the world[1] by all on whom had been bestowed the senses needful for the perception of His resurrection-body; that, as King of the Jews, He then judged the nation that had rejected and murdered Him, and had cruelly persecuted His innocent followers; that He then took back with Him to their heavenly home—to the place which He had been preparing for them in the Father's house of many mansions —those of His disciples who, in eager anticipation of His return, were, at the time, living really saintly and consecrated lives; and that at the same period the first Resurrection took place, the best and noblest of His people who had already left the earth, being then removed from the intermediate state of Paradise to the full glory of Heaven.

If these events took place, then it follows that the Mosaic dispensation which had been introduced amid the thunders of Sinai[2] was terminated in a scene of yet more awful grandeur and solemnity; that the judgment of the human race, instead of coming in one great transaction at the end of all

[1] We know from Matt. xxiv. that our Lord's visible appearance was not to be restricted to one place. There was to be no need, in that day, for anyone to travel to some other locality, in order to see Him, for He Himself declared that "as the lightning cometh from the east, and is *seen* even unto the west," so should the coming of the Son of man be (verse 27), ere that generation passed away (verse 34).

[2] So terrible was the sight that even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake (Heb. xii. 21). "[God] whose voice then shook the earth, but now He hath promised saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven" (Heb. xii. 26).

things, has been divided into at least two parts; and that God's ancient people, the Jews, being ripe and ready for judgment at least 1800 years before the rest of the world, were judged before the rest of the world, in exact accordance with the teaching of the apostle Paul that reward and retribution would come to the Jew *first*, and afterwards to the Greek—*i.e.*, the Gentile (Rom. ii. 9, 10).

It also follows that the Kingdom of God predicted by prophets and psalmists, and 1860 years ago confidently declared by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles, to be already *at hand*,* was established in heaven over the earth in 70 A.D., the devil being then bound, and no longer permitted to be "the prince of this world." It is, therefore, of importance to endeavour to obtain a clear and scriptural conception of the meaning of the "KINGDOM OF GOD," which, as we know, formed the main subject of our Lord's conversation with His disciples during the six weeks which intervened between His resurrection and ascension (Acts i. 3).

The Kingdom of God.—To begin with, be it remembered that the Jewish commonwealth was, from first to last, a theocracy. It is true that, in response to the entreaty of the people, visible rulers were granted to them in the persons of Saul and David and their successors. Yet Jehovah Himself

* Matt. iii. 2; iv. 17; x. 7.

was still their only real king, and these human governors were merely His representatives, ruling as viceroys in His name. But the majority of Jewish and Israelitish sovereigns proved very unworthy representatives of the Divine Monarch, losing sight, as they did, of their solemn duties and responsibilities; exerting their power cruelly and selfishly; and leading the people entrusted to their charge into all manner of idolatry and wickedness. This deplorable state of things was not to be permitted to continue for ever. The writings of Old Testament psalmists and prophets abound in predictions that one day a son should be born to the family of David who should prove an ideal ruler, and, as a perfect representative of the Divine and Invisible King, reign in righteousness over the whole human race. *And to the Jews the Messiah's exaltation over the world carried with it the idea of their own exaltation as an elect nation.* Instead of being merely subjects and citizens in the Kingdom of God, they believed that, in simple virtue of their descent, they would share in the throne of God's anointed, and form His court and aristocracy. But when John the Baptist appeared proclaiming that the long-looked for Kingdom was now in the near future about to be set up, the qualifications which he solemnly announced as essential to admission thereto proved intensely mortifying to the national pride of his countrymen. To have Abraham's

blood running in their veins availed them nothing, he declared, for the enjoyment of these glorious privileges and the attainment of this high destiny. The outward baptism of water which he administered pointed forward to, and indicated the absolute necessity of, an inward and spiritual cleansing; for none but the penitent, the pardoned, and the spiritually cleansed need ever hope to be associated with the coming Messiah in His exaltation over the human race, or to share in the glory and blessedness of His Kingdom.

This view of the matter gives the key to a great variety of passages of Scripture, and enables us more clearly to understand the statement of Paul (2 Tim. ii. 20) that within the church as within a great house "there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some unto honour and some unto dishonour." *The gospel of the Kingdom sets before us as the goal of our prayers and our efforts something more than mere salvation, or mere forgiveness and freedom from sin and its punishment.* In the Christian warfare there is a "prize"[1] and a "crown"[2]—kingly or otherwise—which we may either win, or (without necessarily ceasing to be Christians) miss and lose.

[1] "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the PRIZE?" (1 Cor. ix. 24); "I press on toward the goal unto the PRIZE of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 14).

[2] "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the CROWN of life" (Rev. ii. 10); "when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the CROWN of glory which fadeth not away" (1 Peter v. 4); "the CROWN of life which the Lord promised to them that love him" (James i. 12).

Many and emphatic are the statements of Scripture which involve the conclusion that truly saintly and consecrated believers are *not* merely to occupy the position of *subjects and citizens* in the Kingdom of heaven. Having been made one with Jesus Christ in the conflict with evil here on earth, and become dead with Him to the world and to all manner of selfishness and sin, they will assuredly also be made one with Him in His Divine Kingship, and share hereafter in His glorious exaltation over the human race. God appointed His Son to be heir of all things (Heb. i. 2), and promised to give Him the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Ps. ii. 8). But it is also true that if, in the highest possible sense, we also are children of God, then we are *joint-heirs* with Christ (Rom. viii. 17), for he that overcometh shall *inherit all things* (Rev. xxi. 7). If we suffer with Him we shall also *reign* with Him (2 Tim. ii. 12). The faithful and diligent servant is placed in a *position of influence* over the inhabitants of ten or five cities (Luke xix. 17) and has granted to him *authority* over the nations (Rev. ii. 26), being set over all that the Saviour Himself has (Luke xii. 44).

It is certain that in the Kingdom of heaven the sovereignty belongs not only to the Lord Jesus, but also to His people; for as the result of their having been closely associated with their

Master amid temptation and trial, He has appointed to the apostles,[1] and to all believers of the first rank, a Kingdom in the same sense that God has appointed a Kingdom to Him. In His love the Father calls us *to share His own Kingdom and glory* (1 Thess. ii. 12). It was predicted that the *real saints* of the Most High should "receive the Kingdom and possess the Kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever" (Dan. vii. 18). "He that overcometh," said the Saviour, "I will give to him to SIT DOWN WITH ME ON MY THRONE, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev. iii. 21).

The spiritual nature of Christ's Kingdom.—In this connection, it is of vital importance to remember the spiritual nature of Christ's Kingdom. We can only secure the crown of glory hereafter, by here and now joyfully accepting His cross, as that whereon, in very deed, the world was crucified unto us, and we unto the world (Gal. vi. 14). He who would be first in the Kingdom of heaven, must be willing like Jesus Himself to be last and least on earth; the greatest man in the sight of God being the servant of all (Mark ix. 35). The discipline for this special blessedness often involves us in *more than an ordinary share of afflic-*

[1] "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations; and I appoint unto you a Kingdom EVEN AS My Father appointed unto Me" (Luke xxii. 29). "The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given unto them" (John xvii. 22).

tion.[1] To some it has been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf (Phil. i. 29). Hence it is that they have to drink the same cup of sorrow which the Saviour Himself drank, and be baptised with the same baptism of sorrow as that wherewith He was baptised (Mark x. 38); for it is *through much tribulation* that we enter the Kingdom (Acts xiv. 22). *Utter self-renunciation* is also needed to qualify us for the full glory of Heaven. It means parting with the right hand or the right eye rather than continuing in any known sin (Matt. v. 29, 30). The "Kingdom" is the *one pearl of great price*, to secure which a righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and pharisees is indispensable (Matt. v. 20); and for which no profession of religion, apart from the obedience to the will of God, will avail (Matt. vii. 21). It is an unspeakable glory, for the sake of which a man must not merely be content to carry a nominal cross and make conventional sacrifices, but, in utter literalness, be willing (if need be) at the call of Christ to part with *all that he hath* (Matt. xiii. 46); and, in comparison, reckon all earthly things as dung (Phil. iii. 8). *Great humility* is also essential. The Kingdom belongs only to

[1] "My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord; nor faint when thou art reproved of Him. For *whom the Lord loveth* He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye are *without chastening*, . . . then are ye bastards, and *not sons*" (Heb. xii. 5, 6, 8). "To the end that ye may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, *for which ye also suffer*" (2 Thess. i. 5).

those who in heart resemble little children (Mark x. 14); and unless a man stoops to humble himself as a little child he shall in no wise enter therein (Luke xviii. 17). We thus come to understand the *rare earnestness and concentration of purpose* involved in the statements that the Kingdom is to be the foremost object of our desires (Matt. vi. 33); that it suffers violence, and that "men of violence" are alone able to take it by force (Matt. xi. 12); and that no man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom (Luke ix. 62). Here also we have the probable reason why comparatively few of earth's millions will ever attain to the special blessedness of being associated with the Saviour in His glory. The gate that leads to the Kingdom is *narrow* (Luke xiii. 24); and, in every age, they that overcome all obstacles and press through it are "a little flock" (Luke xii. 32). "Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one obtaineth the prize?" (1 Cor. ix. 24)

Yet the great reward is placed within the reach of each one of us; and if, as individuals, we do not obtain it, the fault will be altogether our own. Every man to whom the "gospel of the Kingdom" is proclaimed is called by God, both here and hereafter, to a position of spiritual pre-eminence over those to whom the gospel has not yet been preached. By His supernatural grace we may form part of a spiritual aristocracy, not necessarily indeed pre-

eminent in ways that the world as yet recognises or cares for; yet, now and ever, grand and glorious and heroic in the sight of God by reason of our humility, our calm patience and endurance, our nobility of character, our self-renouncing love and all-inclusive charity, and our absolute devotion to the will of God and to the welfare of our fellow-men. It is qualities such as these, built up on repentance and faith, that, in the boundless and unmerited kindness of God our Father, will insure our admission to the Kingdom of heaven; and cause us to be associated with the Lord Jesus in serving and saving, in teaching and ruling, the great mass of humanity. No Christian would ever covet for himself an earthly sovereignty except for the sake of the power it would give him of doing good—the wide scope it would afford for the exercise of wisdom and benevolence. So also Christ's Kingdom in which His people have the high honour of sharing, is not of this world (John xviii. 36). It is absolutely dissociated from all mere self-aggrandisement. The one object for which it exists is to destroy all sin and sorrow, and thus promote the glory of God and the welfare of His creatures. His sovereignty also differs from earthly sovereignties in that He appeals far more to love than to fear; and rules men by the sweet reasonableness of His commands, and by the beauty and perfection of His own life and character. His Kingship is not merely

a thing of the future, but has been a fact for more than eighteen hundred years. At His ascension, having previously offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, He sat down at the right hand of God (Mark xvi. 19; Heb. i. 3; x. 12; xii. 2; Acts ii. 33; vii. 55; Phil. ii. 9-11), all authority and power being committed to Him in heaven and on earth (Matt. xxviii. 18).[1]

But the KINGDOM OF GOD means not only the Kingship of Christ over men, but THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST AND HIS SAINTS; and, throughout the New Testament, the commencement of this Kingdom is associated with the Lord's second advent — a personal and visible return to the earth. The purpose of these pages is to briefly set forth the evidence that exists for believing that the second advent took place at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and was accompanied by a spiritual judgment of the Jews; a resurrection from Hades (the intermediate state) to a higher sphere, of the saints who had previously left the earth; and by the translation to heaven of Christians of the first rank throughout the world, who were alive at the time; that the prince of darkness was then imprisoned in the abyss, and the Kingdom of God

[1] God "raised Him from the dead, and made Him sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come: and He put all things in subjection under His feet" (Ephes. i. 20-22). Jesus Christ "is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven; angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him" (1 Peter iii. 22).

(meaning by those words, the Kingship of Christ and His saints) established; and that the saints are at this moment reigning with the Lord Jesus in heaven, not *on* but (as the Greek word may equally well be rendered)[1] *over* the earth, and doubtless also over the whole of humanity in the unseen world of spirits.

A world-wide judgment yet to come.—In the New Testament, there are also clear and definite announcements of a world-wide resurrection and a world-wide judgment still future. "When the thousand years are finished . . . I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it . . . And I saw the dead, *the great and the small*, standing before the throne; and books were opened . . and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. xx. 7, 11-13). "The hour cometh when *all* that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have practised ill unto the resurrection of judgment" (John v. 29). The *personal presence* of the Lord Jesus is implied by the fact that He will be seen sitting on the great white throne; and that it is in response to His voice that all who are then dead will rise from their graves. But in any case belief in a third advent is not in any way inconsistent with the fact that the second advent

[1] Compare Matt. xxviii. 18: "All authority in heaven and *on* (or *over*) the earth."

took place 1800 years ago. Yet truth forbids us to apply to the first-named event details which belonged only to the last-named; and which have, therefore, been realised once for all.

NOTE.—The world in which we live has for long ages been the scene of a mighty conflict between the antagonistic powers of good and evil contending for the possession of the human race. In the nature of the case it is unlikely that this conflict is destined never to be brought to a decisive issue. Accordingly the history of the world is found to be a record of a slow but sure overcoming of evil by good, and there are many statements in Scripture which point to a consummation of all things earthly and to a final victory of good over evil. Thus the prayer "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. vi. 10), being divinely-taught, contains in itself a prophecy and a promise of its own fulfilment. A new heaven and a new earth are yet to be (Rev. xxi. 1). "The times of the Gentiles" are to run their appointed course and have an end (Luke xxi. 24; Ephes. i. 10). Christ's Millennial Kingdom in which we are now living is not to last for ever. To Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall own that He is Lord (Phil. ii. 10, 11), and then, having put all His enemies under His feet, He will surrender the Kingdom to the Father—that God may be all in all (I. Cor. xv. 28).

CHAPTER II.

The Evidence from the Epistles.

It does not require very minute study to discover that the writings of the apostles are saturated, through and through, with the thought of the certainty of the Lord's immediate and sudden return to the earth in what *was then* (but in the nature of the case is now no longer) the near future, to judge and punish His enemies, and to bring perfect salvation and rest to those of His disciples who, in anticipation of His coming, were living earnest and prayerful lives. The object of this chapter is to examine the epistles, as far as possible in the order in which they were written, and briefly pass in review the chief statements and implications which they contain as to what was then the near approach of Christ's second advent.

1st Thessalonians.—The coming of the Lord is a theme on which Paul dwells in his first letter to the Thessalonians (52 A.D.). It was an event already sufficiently near at hand for these primitive Christians to live in expectation of it*—and

* "Ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God and *to wait for His Son from heaven*" (i. 10).

one indeed which would be sure to occur within the lifetime of some of them[1] whilst they were still in the body.[2]

2nd Thessalonians. — In this letter, addressed to the members of the same church, a few months later, Paul comforted them amid the terrible sufferings which they were enduring for Christ's sake with the thought that *it was only for a little time.* Their persecutors were to be punished and destroyed, and they themselves to find deliverance and rest, not at death, but at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven (i. 7). Paul also spoke of *their* "gathering together" unto Christ on this solemn occasion (ch. ii. 1), thus implying that some of his readers would be among the living saints who were then to be gathered by the angels from the four quarters of heaven (Matt. xxiv. 31). But the event was not as yet so near as these Thessalonians, misjudging what the apostle had said in his former letter, had concluded. Our authorised English version gives an erroneous rendering of ch. ii. 2. That "the day of the Lord" was truly "at hand" in the near future was an inevitable inference from the apostle's previous utterances on the subject, and Paul does not here contradict and stultify himself by suggest-

[1] "The dead in Christ shall rise first: then WE *that are alive* that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (iv. 17).

[2] "May your spirit and soul and *body* be preserved entire, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 23).

ing otherwise. But the Thessalonians had failed to see that the language employed in the first epistle admitted of a possible delay of months or even years, and the false idea therefore which the apostle strenuously seeks to correct is that "the day of the Lord" *had now actually arrived* ("is now present," Revised Bible). Christ's advent was to take place in the near future, but as the apostle had repeatedly told his readers in private whilst still with them (verse 5), there were two other events that had not yet taken place which must precede it—a great "falling away" and the revelation of "the man of sin." We know from John's first epistle, written in the "last hour" of the Mosaic dispensation (ii. 18), that before the destruction of Jerusalem the first event had happened (ii. 19; iv. 3). John asserts that he and his readers knew with certainty that the end was now immediately at hand, for by that time a great defection from the faith had taken place, and not merely one Antichrist but many Antichrists had appeared. "Little children, it is THE LAST HOUR: and as ye heard that Antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many Antichrists, WHEREBY WE KNOW THAT IT IS THE LAST HOUR" (1 John ii. 18). On the other hand, in 2 Thess. ii., Paul writing nearly twenty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, implies that the Thessalonians *ought to have known* that the day of the Lord was not as yet immediately at hand, for it must have been clear to

all that certain events which they had been plainly taught were to precede it—the great apostasy and the manifestation of the man of sin—had not yet been realised. The name of "the man of sin," whose evil influence was already beginning to be felt; and whose true character and awful wickedness would ere long be manifest to the world; the apostle, to avoid needlessly compromising himself and his readers, does not mention; but it was apparently well known to them, for he had repeatedly spoken to them of him in private. (Remember ye not that when I was yet with you, I *kept telling*[1] you these things? ii. 5). We may rightly cease to identify "the man of sin" with the Papacy, and may well believe him to have been one and the same with the monster NERO, the vilest and most brutal of men, the murderer of his own wife and mother, and the fiendish persecutor of the Christian Church. Thus, in agreement with Paul's description of "the man of sin," we know that (1) Nero was an individual holding an exalted position in the world. (2) He claimed divine honours.[2] (3) He was a monster of wickedness and lawlessness. (4) He was one from whom,

[1] The verb is in the imperfect tense.

[2] "The image of the Emperor was at that time the object of religious reverence: he was a deity on earth (Dîs æqua potestas, Juv. iv. 71); and the worship paid to him was a real worship. It is a striking thought, that in those times (setting aside effete forms of religion), the only two genuine worships in the civilized world were the worship of a Tiberius or a Nero on the one hand, and the worship of Christ on the other."—CONYBEARE & HOWSON, St. Paul, chap i.

humanly speaking, Paul and the Thessalonians had, personally, much to fear. (5) He was doomed to perish.

The person who at the time the apostle wrote proved a hindrance to the full manifestation of Nero's character* may either have been his step-father, the Emperor Claudius, whom he was soon to succeed on the throne of Rome, or his tutor the noble Seneca, whom, later on, he caused to be murdered. In the fact that Nero died in June, A.D. 68, two years before the capture and destruction of Jerusalem, we have a possible explanation of the statement that the Lord Jesus would bring to nought "the man of sin" by the "manifestation (or first glimmerings) of His coming;" or we may regard Nero as having been consumed in the spiritual world, after death, when Christ personally returned to the earth, a year or two later.

1st Corinthians.—In this epistle (58 A.D.), Paul thanks God that these Christians were living in constant expectation of the Lord's reappearance—"waiting for" it (i. 7). "The time is shortened," he declares (vii. 29). Unlike modern believers who, reasoning by analogy, may rightly celebrate the Lord's Supper until death terminates their earthly probation, and introduces them to (or for ever excludes them from) the Kingdom of God

* "The mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way" (2 Thess. ii. 7).

now already in existence in heaven, these primitive Christians were to observe it not until death, but "until He came" (xi. 26) to inaugurate that kingdom. Addressing the members of the then existing Corinthian church, Paul distinctly implies that some at least of *them* would remain on earth until the period of the second advent and first resurrection ("*we* shall *not all* sleep, but we shall all be changed." Ch. xv. 51). Finally, the Aramaic phrase, Maran atha, which occurs at the conclusion of the epistle means, as may be seen from the margin of the Revised Bible, "our Lord is coming." Into this brief watchword the apostle's ceaseless and emphatic declarations on the subject were concentrated.

Unless the second advent took place in the lifetime of some of the Corinthians to whom this letter was written, Paul's prediction was falsified, for then it is not true that *they* shewed forth the Lord's death till He came. In any case, since it is only possible for one generation of men to be alive at the time of the second advent, and all other Christians must observe the ordinance until death or until a third advent, it is as reasonable and easy to believe that the first Christians celebrated the Lord's supper until He came, and that the rest of the Church are to observe it until death, as to believe that the mass of the Church have been celebrating the ordinance until death, and that a small minority—those who are alive at a future

advent—will alone be able to literally fulfil the words of the Apostle: "YE do show the Lord's death UNTIL HE COME."

Romans.—The original Greek shows that Paul taught that at the period this epistle was written (59 A.D.), Christ's glory was *soon* to be revealed (viii. 18). The apostle asserts that it was high time for his readers to awake out of sleep, for salvation was now nearer to them than when they first believed. The night was far spent, and the day already at hand (xiii. 11, 12). The God of peace would *shortly* bruise Satan under their feet (xvi. 20).

Philippians.—This letter (62 A.D.) has several references to "the day of Jesus Christ." The apostle announces afresh that "the Lord is at hand" (iv. 6), and represents himself and his readers as living in constant expectation of His reappearance (iii. 20).

The Pastoral Epistles.—The Epiphany was to take place within the lifetime of Timothy, for it is this event and not death that Paul speaks of as terminating the period of his friend's earthly obedience (1 Tim. vi. 14). If the advent has not yet been realised, Paul asked an impossibility from Timothy when he thus bade him "Keep the commandment until the appearing of Jesus Christ." In 2 Tim. iv. 1, the original Greek also shows that the apostle declared not merely that Jesus Christ

would one day judge the living and the dead, but that at the time this epistle was written He was about to do so.

1st Peter.—In this letter we have a precisely similar statement (iv. 5). Writing (66 A.D.) as a Jew and mainly to Jews, on the very eve of the dissolution of the Mosaic economy, Peter also announced that the end of all things was at hand (iv. 7); that Christ's glory was *about* to be revealed (v. 1); and that the time had now come "for judgment to begin" (iv. 17).

2nd Peter.—The authenticity of this epistle has been continually called in question. It is probable that all of it but the first chapter was written in the post-apostolic age. Among the reasons for this conclusion, it may be pointed out that the persons addressed were apparently no longer exposed to persecution as the readers of the first epistle had been, and the resemblances between the last two chapters and the epistle of Jude are so many and so striking as to suggest that portions have been directly copied therefrom. Further, a sufficient time is seen to have elapsed for Paul's letters to have become so widely known as already to be the subject of many varied interpretations (iii. 16), and for them to have taken rank side by side with the ancient Hebrew Scriptures. Still more significant and more fatal to the authenticity of the two latter chapters of the 2nd epistle of Peter is the

fact, that unlike any other New Testament writer, the author associates the passing away of the present system of things and the promise of new heavens and a new earth with Christ's advent to inaugurate His millennial kingdom (ch. iii. 10), instead of connecting the consummation of all things with the second (universal) resurrection and judgment destined to take place at the termination of that millennial kingdom "a thousand years" later (Rev. xx. 11, xxi. 1).

James.—The first readers of this epistle were involved in great affliction. The event destined to bring them deliverance and rest, and which the apostle therefore speaks of as that "until" which they had need of patience and endurance was not death, but as in the case of other Christians (2 Thess. i. 7) the reappearance of the Saviour Himself. (Be patient therefore, brethren, *until the coming of the Lord*; v. 7). Once again we have the declaration that the coming of the Lord was at hand (v. 8). And, indeed, at the time James wrote this epistle the advent was so near that it could already be truly said—"The judge standeth before the doors" (v. 9).

1st John.—This letter, written at the extreme end of the Jewish dispensation ("It is THE LAST HOUR" chap. ii. 18, Revised Bible), is exceedingly valuable in the consideration of the question under discussion,

since it proves[1] that already, before the destruction of Jerusalem, there had occurred a great falling away from the faith, similar to that predicted as destined to precede the Lord's second advent.[2] Christ's personal reappearance and not admission to heaven at death was regarded by John as the goal and centre of the hopes cherished by the Christians to whom the epistle is addressed.[3] And, in fact, so near was the event in question that at the moment the apostle wrote it could be truly said—"The darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth" (ch. ii. 8, Revised Bible).

Hebrews.—This epistle, written in the last days of the Jewish dispensation (ch. i. 2; ix. 26), whilst the temple was still standing (ix. 8), represents the day of Christ as being so near at hand that the Christians then living were within sight of it—they could actually "see" it approaching (x. 25). The brief time that must intervene before its arrival might be measured by days rather than by years: "Exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called to-day" (ch. iii. 13). "Yet a *very* little while, and He that cometh shall come, and *shall not tarry*"

1 "As ye have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many Antichrists, *whereby we know that it is the last hour.* They went out from us but they were not of us, for if they had been of us they would have continued with us" (ii. 18, 19).

2 "Because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of *the many* shall wax cold" (Matt. xxiv. 12). "It shall not be (*or* that day shall not come) except the falling away come first" (2 Thess. ii. 3).

3 "And now my little children, abide in Him; that if (*or* when) He shall be manifested, we may have boldness and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." "We know that if (*or* when) He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him even as He is" (1 John ii. 28; iii. 2).

(x. 37). The immediateness of the Lord's second advent is implied in this epistle in other profoundly interesting ways. The author argues that the rest and inheritance promised by God to the patriarchs had been only partially realised in the gift of the earthly Canaan. This had been proved by the renewal of the promise in the time of David, long after the children of Israel had come into the possession of Palestine under Joshua. The predicted inheritance could only find its full accomplishment when the people of God reached "a better country, that is a heavenly," of which the earthly Canaan had been but the dim shadow (xi. 16). Into this heavenly Canaan, Christ had been the first to enter, resting from His work of redemption as God in the beginning did from His work of creation (iv. 10). Up to the hour when the epistle to the Hebrews was written, the promise of a Sabbath rest to the people of God still remained unfulfilled in its entirety to any human being but the Saviour Himself. But the Christians of that day are spoken of as living at an epoch of tremendous importance (for which Old Testament believers had had to wait long in a condition of imperfect happiness and perhaps imperfect sanctification—xi. 40), when, by the inauguration of the Kingdom of God and the heavenly Jerusalem, the promise was at length about to receive a full and exhaustive realisation. Faithful Christians are represented as being on the

very point of entering on their heavenly rest and inheritance (iv. 3), and the fact that by unbelief and disobedience the Israelitish generation which had come out from Egypt under Moses had excluded themselves from the earthly Canaan, is recalled as a solemn warning; the primitive Christians being entreated to be intensely in earnest, lest through the hardening of their hearts they also should fall short of the grace of God (iv. 1), and forfeit the still greater blessing of the heavenly Canaan which lay immediately before them; for only by faith and patience could they inherit the promises (vi. 12).

The same facts are represented over again under a somewhat different aspect.

Many other things besides the earthly Canaan were "copies of the things in the heavens" (Heb. ix. 23). The Jewish Sabbath was a temporary shadow of which the rest that remained for the people of God is the abiding reality. The Jerusalem that once was, typified the Jerusalem that is above (Gal. iv. 25, 26). The Jewish commonwealth which constituted the earthly Kingdom of God foreshadowed His perfect heavenly Kingdom, which was immediately to succeed it. And so also, in the epistle to the Hebrews, the earthly temple at Jerusalem is represented as being but a copy of the heavenly temple — of that true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, not man (viii. 2).

In the heavenly temple, as in the earthly one,

there is not only a holy place, but also an innermost sanctuary—the Holy of holies, where alone the immediate presence of the Father is manifested. Up to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, neither David nor any other mere man had ascended to this the highest heaven,[1] the way into this holy place not having been made manifest *so long as the Jewish temple stood* (Hebrews ix. 8). Christ, however, had now penetrated through the veil (vi. 19), and as our great High Priest had passed through the heavens and been made higher than the heavens (vii. 26). He had entered in once for all into the holy place, there to appear before the face of God on man's behalf (ix. 24). And in penetrating to this innermost sanctuary of heaven He had only done so as the forerunner[2] of His faithful people—in anticipation of the time, then near at hand, when He should welcome them into the Kingdom (xii. 28) and introduce them also into the immediate presence of His God and Father. (These are they which follow the Lamb *whithersoever He goeth!* Rev. xiv. 4). So near to the heavenly Jerusalem did the first readers of the epistle to the Hebrews stand that the writer discerns a striking analogy between the inauguration and the consummation of the Jewish dispensation —a parallel, or rather a contrast, between the position

[1] "David is not ascended into the heavens" said Peter speaking in 33 A.D. (Acts ii. 34). "No man hath ascended into heaven" said our Lord a year or two before, "but He that descended out of heaven" (John iii. 13).

[2] A forerunner goes before *at no great distance*

of the Israelites as they stood in the wilderness before Mount Sinai and that of the primitive Christians before Mount Zion (Hebrews xii. 22), the description of which is an indication of the author having been familiar, at the time he wrote, with the account of it given in Rev. xiv. which must therefore bear an earlier date than this epistle.

The inference to be drawn.—This brief review of the Epistles leaves but little doubt that the apostles believed, and continually taught their converts, that the Lord's return to the earth would take place in what *was then* the near future. It is true that Christians of later ages, fancying that the frank admission of the fact must result in dangerous consequences, have resisted the conclusion that this was really the belief and teaching of the apostles. Forgetting that the glad tidings with which the first preachers of Christianity were entrusted were emphatically "the glad tidings of the Kingdom," and that our Lord Himself had bidden them proclaim as a main part of their message the blessed fact that that Kingdom was then *at hand* (Matt. x. 7), it has been repeatedly urged that the apostles did not attach the ordinary everyday meaning to such words as "shortly," but used them in a sense that admitted of an indefinite lapse of time intervening. In support of this contention a passage from the 2nd. Epistle of Peter (iii. 8) is constantly quoted to prove that God's way of reckoning time is not the same

as man's. Nay, more, it is confidently asserted that in one particular instance at least (2 Thess. ii. 2) we have direct evidence that the utterances of the apostles on the subject did not admit of the meaning we should otherwise have regarded as necessarily belonging thereto. To each of these objections there is an answer, shewing that the wicked servant *did not speak the truth* when he said "My Lord *delayeth* His coming" (Luke xii. 45). As a matter of fact, we know from Jer. xxvii. 16, that the use of the word "shortly" is incompatible with a lapse of 70 years, much more with one of 1800 years. The vessels of the temple were brought back to Jerusalem when after 70 years the children of Israel returned from captivity (Ezra i. 11). Yet when, at the beginning of the captivity, certain prophets predicted that this would happen *shortly*, God Himself by the mouth of Jeremiah characterised these men as liars. "Thus saith the Lord, hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold the vessels of the LORD'S house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon: *for they prophesy a lie unto you.*"

"After the lapse of perhaps hundreds of years" may be the exact opposite of "shortly," and if the language used admits of this delay having really occurred, then it must have conveyed a false impression to those to whom it was originally addressed. Moreover all certainty in religion ceases,

for words have no longer any fixed signification, and we can never be sure, for example, that in the apostolic vocabulary "good" does not mean "evil," and "evil" "good." Further, a little consideration will at once show that 2 Peter iii. 8 does not justify the inference that if God has said that a certain event will happen in one day's time it is possible that, after all, it may not happen for a thousand years, or that something which He has declared will take place a thousand years hence may take us by surprise by occurring to-morrow. In reality this verse is evidence in exactly the opposite direction to that in which it is usually quoted, for the writer is there arguing for the *punctuality* with which God keeps His promises when they fall due ; it matters not whether the time previously specified for their fulfilment be exceedingly short—*one day*, or exceedingly long—*a thousand years!* With regard to 2 Thessalonians ii. 2, reference has been already made to the fact that Paul does not contradict his previous utterances by admitting that, after all, Christ's return to the earth may prove to be an event of the distant future, but writing about 52 A.D., nearly 20 years before the destruction of Jerusalem, he corrects the erroneous idea that the day of the Lord had now actually arrived ("is now present"—Revised Bible).

When once the fact is realised that the apostles

not only believed, but also continually taught, that Christ was to return to judgment in the near future, one of two results inevitably follows. Either the coming of the Lord to judge His enemies and to set up His heavenly Kingdom took place shortly after the New Testament epistles were written, or else the apostles were altogether mistaken when they so confidently predicted that such would be the case. Partly from not fully apprehending the resulting consequences, the latter supposition is that which has usually prevailed. In explanation, it has been plausibly urged that it is a small thing for the apostles to have been mistaken in their "perspective," and that previously to His ascension Jesus Himself had reminded them that it was not for them to know times and seasons (Acts i. 7). But to argue thus is to ignore the fact that, like John the Baptist, they had been specially sent out into the world to herald the immediate coming of the heavenly Kingdom,* and that although at Christ's ascension much that concerned their ministry and their message may have remained hidden from them, this can no longer have been the case after the day of Pentecost (Acts ii). They were then filled with the Holy Spirit—that spirit of truth which the Lord Jesus had promised should certify them from

* "As ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt. x. 7). "Even the dust from the city, that cleaveth to our feet, we do wipe off against you: *howbeit, know this that the Kingdom of God is come nigh*" (Luke x. 11).

error and guide them into all the truth so far as their mission and message to the world were concerned, and especially enlighten them as to the things which were soon to happen.

"The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, *He shall teach you all things*" (John xiv. 26).

"When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all the truth .... He shall declare unto you *the things that are to come*" (John xvi. 13).

"Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and *ye know all things*" (i John ii. 20).

To admit that the apostles were, one and all, mistaken in teaching the immediateness of the Lord's advent is to inflict a grievous wound upon what has always been regarded as the Divine authority and inspiration with which they spoke and wrote, and greatly to weaken respect for their utterances on other subjects.

Happily, however, we are not shut up to the painful conclusion that the apostles and the whole primitive church were thus the victims of a strong delusion, and that all their confident expectations as to the immediateness of the Lord's return ended in a *fiasco*. A candid examination of the Gospel narratives renders it abundantly clear that these expectations cannot have been falsified, since they rested on the plain, emphatic, and constantly repeated declarations of One who is the embodiment

of all truth—the Son of God, Himself. Therefore, in further elucidation of the matter, we next proceed to an examination of such of our Lord's own words as limit the time within which He would personally come back to the earth.

CHAPTER III.

The Evidence from the Gospels.

Matt. xxiv., Mark xiii., Luke xxi.—In Matthew xxiv. 3, we find the apostles, doubtless as the result of their Master's previous teaching, associating together three events as likely to happen at one and the same time—the destruction of the temple, a return of Christ to judgment, and *not* the end of the world, but (as may be seen from the margin of the Revised Bible) the end of *the age*, that is, of the Jewish dispensation.* "As He sat on the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, *when* shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming? and of *the consummation of the age?*" That the three questions contained in this verse were practically but one, is clearly shewn by the fact that our Lord responds not with three answers, but with only one. In the long discourse that follows there is not the faintest hint of the need of any "double interpretation." Jesus says not a word about the end of the world, but simply describes beforehand events that were to precede and accompany the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. He also declared that not merely a part but the whole of the

*See Appendix B.

things of which He spoke would receive an exhaustive fulfilment within the lifetime of His earthly contemporaries.

For the truth of the greater part of these predictions we have independent historical evidence. Josephus and others record the occurrence, in the last days of the Jewish dispensation, of wars and famines, of earthquakes and physical convulsions, of cruel persecutions and terrible suffering. That the predictions concerning a great falling away from the faith,[1] the rise of antichrists, and the universal diffusion of the gospel throughout the then known world, were realised before the destruction of Jerusalem, we have proofs within the New Testament itself. The 1st epistle of John, written in the 'last hour' of the Jewish dispensation (ch. ii. 18 Revised Bible) announces the appearance of many antichrists, speaks of a great apostasy from the faith (ii. 19), and declares that already many false prophets have gone out into the world (iv. 1). This also exactly agrees with the account given in Rev. ii and iii, of the degenerate condition of the seven churches of Asia,[2] afflicted as they were by evil practices and pernicious teaching.

[1] In the parable of the Sower (Matt. xiii)., our Lord taught that only a small minority of His disciples would bring forth fruit to perfection. Compare Luke xviii. 8: "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"

The Apocalypse, as we know from internal evidence (Behold He cometh, i. 7; Behold I come quickly, iii. 11 and xxii. 7, 12; Behold I come as a thief, xvi. 15; Surely I come quickly, xxii. 20) was written at a time (probably 67 A.D.) when the Lord's coming was immediately at hand.

With regard to the wide diffusion of the gospel, predicted in Matt. xxiv. 14, as one of the signs that would accompany 'the end,' it is to be remembered that before the discovery of America and Australia the word "world" had a far narrower meaning than at present, and that 1800 years ago it meant simply the Roman Empire. It was only in this sense, for example, that the emperor Augustus could cause a census of "all the world" to be taken (Luke ii. 1). We have also evidence that this was the meaning belonging to the word in New Testament times from the fact that in the lifetime of the apostles the gospel had already penetrated through the whole "world," had been preached in all creation under heaven (Col. i. 6, 23), and made known to all nations (Rom. xvi. 26). Christ had said to them: "*Ye* shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and *unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts i. 8). "And they went forth and preached everywhere" (Mark xvi. 20). "Their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Rom. x. 18).

With regard to the darkening of sun and moon, and the falling of the stars of heaven, predicted in Matt. xxiv. 29, as certain to immediately succeed the period of unparalleled suffering, Josephus records marvels seen in the sky at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

"The miserable people did not attend nor give credit to the signs which were so evident, and did so plainly foretell their future desolation; but like men infatuated, without either eyes to see or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. *Thus there was a star resembling a sword which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year.* Thus also before the Jews' rebellion, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Nisan, and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round about the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day-time; which light lasted half-an-hour. A few days after that feast, a certain prodigious and incredible phenonomen appeared. I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals. For, before sun-setting, *chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about among the clouds*" (Wars vi. 5. 2).

The prophet Joel had predicted that in the 'last days' of the Jewish dispensation, (Acts ii. 17) *before the day of the Lord came*, that great and notable day, God would shew wonders in the heaven above (Joel ii. 30). Therefore it may well be that Matt. xxiv. 29, describes the outward appearance of what actually took place; for in accordance with the well-understood usages of every-day life the language of Scripture does not always penetrate, with scientific exactness, to the inmost reality of things, but for practical purposes simply describes the superficial appearance presented to the senses. Striking parallels to this verse are found in the predictions given in Isaiah of the destruction of Babylon and Edom, events which now belong to the remote past. "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine . . . . Therefore I will make the

heavens to tremble, and the earth shall be shaken out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of Hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger" (Isaiah xiii. 10, 13). "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf fadeth from off the vine, and as a fading leaf from the fig tree" (Isaiah xxxiv. 4).

That, 30 years beforehand, Christ was cognisant of the events that would precede and accompany the siege and destruction of Jerusalem is proved by the historical evidence previously referred to. So closely indeed do His predictions correspond to the actual course of events, that some critics maintain that the discourse recorded in Matt. xxiv., Mark xiii., Luke xxi. is not prophecy at all, but must have been written after 70 A.D. *This is an utterly untenable position.* If the words of Matt. xxiv. 30 ("*then* shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven . . and they shall *see* the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory") were not really uttered by Jesus, writers of a later age, who did not know that the second advent had taken place, would not have gratuitously attributed to Him a prediction which had apparently been falsified. But if we examine this eschatological discourse with care and candour, we shall find that *our Lord's supernatural fore-knowledge and the absolute trustworthiness of His state-*

ments on the subject may by it be firmly established to the reasonable satisfaction even of those who, to begin with, may be sceptical as to His divinity. *The known fulfilment of the mass of the predictions is a sure guarantee for the fulfilment of the whole.* It is this that we here contend for, and not for the belief that, apart from independent historical evidence of its accomplishment, every prediction recorded in the Bible, having reference to a time that is now past, was necessarily a true prediction.

The testimony of history demonstrates that the Lord Jesus clearly foresaw the events which would precede and accompany the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. *But His account of these events, given beforehand, is in at least one important respect fuller than any which we have elsewhere. Among the things which would then be certain to take place, He solemnly announces the appearance of the sign of the Son of man in the sky, and His own personal and visible coming on the clouds* (Matt. xxiv. 30). Moreover He illustrates the certainty of His advent following at once the signs He had named, by reference to a common phenomenon, the budding of the fig tree, which always indicated that summer was immediately at hand. The marks of time throughout the chapter are clear and unmistakable: "When YE" (some at least of those to whom He was speaking)[1] "see the abomination of desolation" (v. 15). "THEN shall

[1] The pronouns *you* and *your* cannot be used to the exclusion of the individuals immediately addressed.

be great tribulation" (v. 21). "IMMEDIATELY AFTER the tribulation of those days" (v. 29). "THEN shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and THEN shall all the tribes of the earth (*or* land) mourn, and they shall SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (v. 30). "Even so, YE" (some at least of those to whom He was speaking) "also, when YE see ALL THESE THINGS, know YE that He is nigh, even at the doors" (v. 33). In verses 34 and 35, our Lord makes assurance doubly sure by adding: "*Verily I say unto you* THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS AWAY till all these things *be accomplished.* Heaven and earth shall pass away, but MY WORDS shall not pass away." This was Christ's answer to a question as to time: "*When* shall these things be?" He solemnly assured His apostles that the whole would be realised *in the lifetime of some of them.* The announcement must have been received with surprise, and perhaps with a measure of incredulity, even by those to whom it was originally addressed. At that time there was apparently as little prospect of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the appearance of the Son of man on the clouds of heaven, as there now is of the total destruction of London, and of the winding up of the world's history. But, by the words which He uses, Christ brings into prominence the fact *it is He Himself who is speaking;* and thereby He anticipates, and answers beforehand, the difficulty that some

would find in believing the statement, and the ceaseless attempts that would be made, in subsequent ages, to evade and explain away the natural and common-sense meaning of His words.[1] We have no need to search in some remote corner of the dictionary for the signification of the phrase 'this generation.' The meaning which Jesus Himself, and the evangelist Matthew who here reports what He said, attached to the words, may be readily gathered from Matt. xi. 16: "Whereunto shall I liken *this generation?*" xii. 41: "The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with *this generation*, and shall condemn it" (Compare xii. 42). xii. 45: "Even so shall it be also unto *this evil generation.*" xxiii. 36: "Verily I say unto you, All these things (*i.e.* all the righteous blood shed from Abel to Zachariah) shall come upon *this generation.*" *In each of these instances, the words in question denote our Lord's earthly contemporaries.* The conviction that this is also the meaning to be attached to the phrase in Matt. xxiv. 34, is strengthened (1) by the fact that elsewhere Christ seldom (if indeed ever) mentioned His second advent without assigning to it a narrow limitation of time; and (2) that in this very discourse by the use of the words *ye, you, your, then, immediately after, then,* He had

[1] In like manner in at least one passage, Paul, when teaching that the second advent would take place in the lifetime of some of his readers, insists that the statement rests on divine authority—the fact had been expressly revealed to him by God. "*This we say unto you by the word of the Lord:* that WE *that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord,* shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep" (1 Thess. iv. 14).

already limited the event to the lifetime of the apostles. To suggest that in Matt. xxiv. 34, the words 'this generation' mean 'the Jewish race,' or 'the Christian dispensation,' is to rob the passage of the urgency which it undoubtedly expresses; and to make it as devoid of significance as if a prophet predicting the destruction of London and the burning of St. Paul's Cathedral were to add with great emphasis :—"The Anglo-Saxon race shall not pass out of existence until all this is accomplished!"

The exhortation given in Matt. xxiv. 42, 44, to the first believers, that they were to be earnest and prayerful in anticipation of their Master's return, derived its urgency from the *certainty* of that return taking place in the lifetime of some of them, coupled with the *uncertainty* of the exact date. That generation was not to pass till all those things were accomplished. Yet *the precise day and the precise hour* no one knew; not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only (vv. 34, 36).

That Jesus Christ, whilst declaring His own ignorance of the exact day and hour when He would come back to judgment, yet repeatedly taught that His return would be an event of the near future, and would take place at the close of the Jewish dispensation, and in the lifetime of some at least of His contemporaries, is also an inevitable inference from much that is recorded in other parts of the gospel narratives.

"**At Hand.**"—Mark i. 15, implies that the

heavenly Kingdom, the coming of which is spoken of later on in Rev. xi. 15[1] and xii. 10,[2] as having been realised, had not been set up at the Messiah's birth and first entry into the world, but would follow at no very distant date. Like the Baptist and the apostles, Jesus began His public ministry by declaring *not* that "the Kingdom of God" had now come, but that *the time was fulfilled*, and the Kingdom already *at hand*! Says F. D. Maurice, in the preface to his work on the Apocalypse: "I can never be thankful enough for having arrived at the conviction that the words 'the Kingdom of heaven is at hand' are used by the evangelists in their strictest sense."

John a herald of speedy judgment.—The Baptist was emphatically a preacher of judgment—the forerunner of Jesus the King and Judge, even more than of Jesus the suffering Lamb of God. He predicted the gathering of the grain into the granary, and the burning up of the chaff with unquenchable fire. He solemnly announced that, at the time he spoke, the Kingdom of heaven was *at hand*; the axe was already lying at the root of the trees; and the wrath was *soon to come* (Greek: μέλλω). Matt. iii. 2, 7, 10, 12. *Our Lord afterwards declared* (Matt. xi. 10, 14, 15)[3] *that in the person of John*

[1] "The Kingdom of the world is become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever."

[2] "Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the Kingdom, of our God, and the authority of His Christ."

[3] "*This is he* of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee." "If ye are willing to receive it, *this is Elijah*, which is (*or* was for) to come."

there had already appeared the Elijah spoken of by Malachi (iv. 5),[1] whose coming had been predicted as certain to precede (apparently at no distant date) and herald the second advent of Messiah—that advent to judgment which was to prove to the Jews 'the great and dreadful day of the Lord.'[2] And because Jesus knew that the importance and full significance of John and the second Elijah being one and the same person, would be in danger of being lost sight of, He drew special attention to the fact by adding "*He that hath ears to hear let him hear.*"

Before their ministry ended.—The natural meaning of Matt. x. 23, is that Christ's apostles would barely have time to proclaim throughout Palestine the glad tidings that the Kingdom of heaven was at hand (verse 7) before He Himself returned to set up that Kingdom. "When they persecute you in this city flee into the next; for VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel *till the Son of man be come.*" To suggest that the verse means that our Lord would closely follow His disciples, and overtake them, is to rob the statement of all point. His presence would not hinder their continuing to preach, and it is hard to see how it could provide a

[1] "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord come."

[2] "These are days of vengeance," said Jesus (Luke xxi. 22, 23) referring to the last days of the Jewish dispensation, "that *all things that are written may be fulfilled.* . . . There shall be great distress upon the land, and wrath unto *this people.*"

motive for urgency and haste. Moreover, His instructions on this occasion reached forward to a time after His ascension, when, for His sake, they would be brought before governors and kings (verse 18).

Until the end of the Jewish age.—That the ministry of the apostles, as a whole, was to terminate at the destruction of Jerusalem, is further evidenced by the fact that their Master's promise to be *with* them, in a special and peculiar sense, whilst they fulfilled their commission, *extended only to the close of the Jewish dispensation.* "Go *ye* therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe whatsoever I commanded you; and LO, I AM WITH YOU, ALL THE DAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE AGE" (Matt. xxviii. 20). "Go *ye* into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark xvi. 15). That the phrases "all the nations," "the whole creation," did not include more than *the world as known to the apostles*, is proved by the fact that even in the lifetime of Paul the apostles *had accomplished the work thus committed to them;* the gospel having been made known to all nations (Rom. xvi. 26), and preached in all creation under heaven (Col. i. 6, 23). Indeed the limited range of the phrases in question is shown by the words with which Mark's gospel closes: "And they went forth, and

preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed" (xvi. 20).

At the end of the Jewish age.—"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man, and the harvest is *the consummation of the age*" (Matt. xiii. 37, Revised Bible[1]). Here, be it observed, a harvest[2] was to be gathered in at the close of the Jewish dispensation, and was perhaps thought of as destined to be specially the result of Christ's own personal ministry.

From this parable of the wheat and the tares, it is certain that the distinction in time which some make between the *Epiphany* (Christ's coming to take away His people), and the *Parousia* (Christ's coming with His people to judge the world), is groundless. "Let both grow together until the harvest; and *in the time of the harvest*, I will say to the reapers, Gather up *first* the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into My barn" (Matt. xiii. 30).

"White already to harvest."—In John iv. 35-38, our Lord taught that the spiritual harvest of the Jewish nation was near at hand. He also represented His apostles as being harvest labourers—*reapers;* not sowers of the seed! "Say ye not,

[1]Exactly the same words occur in the exposition of the parable of the Drag-net (Matt. xiii. 49): "So shall it be *in the consummation of the age.*"

[2]Similarly the term "*first-fruits* of His creatures" was applied to the primitive Christians (James i. 18).

There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look upon the fields, that *they are white already to harvest.* He that reapeth, receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. For herein is the saying true, one soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not laboured: others have laboured and ye have entered into their labour." So also in Luke x. 2 ("The harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He send forth labourers unto His harvest"), the use of a verb in the present tense (*is*) denotes the nearness of the harvest, and explains why a necessity existed not for sowers of the word, but for reapers!

Within the lifetime of some who listened.—"Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and My words *in this adulterous and sinful generation*, the Son of man shall be ashamed of him, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark viii. 38). "For the Son of man is *soon to come* (Greek: μέλλει ἔρχεσθαι) in the glory of His Father with His angels, and *then* shall He render unto every man according to his deeds. VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, there be some of them that stand here, which *shall in no wise taste of death* till they *see the Son of man coming* in His kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 27, 28). From these verses, we infer three things as to the

judgment of which they speak : (1) that it specially concerned our Lord's earthly contemporaries ; (2) that it was near at hand ; and (3) that it would take place within the lifetime of some who heard our Lord speak. To make these words apply to the Transfiguration scene which followed after an interval of seven or eight days, is to reduce the solemn prediction of Matt. xvi. 28 to the common-place remark that *some of His audience would be alive in a week's time* to witness that scene ! The Transfiguration prefigured the glories of the second advent, and Peter (2 Epistle i. 16-19) recalls the fact that he and his companions had been eye-witnesses of Christ's majesty on the Mount, as a proof that they were not following cunningly-devised fables when they proclaimed His speedy return to the earth in glory. But, in itself, the Transfiguration was in no sense a coming of Christ or of Christ's Kingdom. *He had first to go away*, before He could return ! The two verses quoted above (Matt. xvi. 27, 28), when taken together, prove unmistakably that our Lord predicted an actual advent to judgment within the lifetime of some who were then listening to him.

"Speedily."—Jesus knew beforehand the awful sufferings that would fall on His followers in the last days of the Jewish dispensation. In the parable of the unjust judge (Luke xviii), *He associated the avenging of God's elect with His own second coming*, and declared that their deliverance from their enemies

would take place, not after a long delay, but *speedily*. If there had been the possibility of a considerable lapse of time, this word "speedily" would not have been required; and, if used, *would have conveyed a false impression* to those to whom the parable was originally addressed.

Within the lifetime of some of the Apostles.—When Christ's disciples were saddened by the announcement that He was soon going to leave them, He comforted them by speaking of the Father's house of many mansions, and with the information that a time was coming when He would manifest (that is, *make visible*) Himself unto them but *not unto the world* (John xiv. 2, 3, 19, 22). One purpose, He declared, of His temporary absence from them was that He might go elsewhere to prepare a home for them. The separation between Him and them would end, not by their following Him into the spirit-world when they died, but by His own return to them; for He declared that He would come back to fetch away from earth *these same sorrowing friends* (I will receive *you* unto Myself), in order that *where He was* they might be also! This promise has a significance for us in modern times, reminding us of the heavenly home which has been in existence since 70 A.D., and to which if we are found faithful we shall have an entrance richly and abundantly administered to us at death. But primarily the promise was made, not to believers

who might live in remote future ages, but to the men who were at that moment listening to Jesus; and therefore to them it was assuredly fulfilled centuries ago. Thus, after the ascension, the expectation and hope of the apostles, so far as their Lord's visible presence was concerned, was naturally and inevitably *the very reverse* of David's sentiment uttered over his dead child :—"I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam. xii. 23).

Within the lifetime of John.—The words addressed to Peter (John xxi. 22): "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" afforded a strong presumption that the second advent would take place in John's lifetime; for *it is impossible that Jesus would suggest this idea only to mislead.* The apostles erroneously inferred that, if the Lord came so soon, John would be exempted from death.

It is this latter inference that the evangelist hastens to correct by pointing out that Christ had not promised that he should not die. Accordingly we have great reason from history to believe that John survived the destruction of Jerusalem, and that he died in the beginning of the second century.

"The hour cometh and now is."—"Now is a judgment of this world."—In John v. 18, we read that the Jews sought to kill Jesus, because He called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. In reply, Christ justified the stupendous claim which He had advanced. He

asserted (verses 21, 22) the right and the power to raise men from the grave and judge them. "For as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom He will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but He hath given all judgment unto the Son, that all may honour the Son even as they honour the Father."

In verse 29, He predicts the universal resurrection and universal judgment yet to come at the end of the world: "The hour cometh in which *all* that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have practised ill unto the resurrection of judgment." But in contrast to this, He mentions in verse 25 with great emphasis and solemnity a period of time which when He spoke was in the near future (the hour cometh and *now is*), when in response to the voice of the Son of God, a resurrection would take place: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and *they that hear* (implying that all would not hear) shall live." The full force of this statement has been evaded by the passage being spiritualised and explained as referring to the communication of spiritual life to those who are dead in sin. Yet surely one and the same principle of interpretation should be applied to verse 25 and verse 29. Either both must be taken literally, or both be spiritualised!

The same phrase "the hour cometh and now is" occurs in John iv. 23,[1] where it is applied to that abolition of all distinctions of race and place in the sight of God which took place, like the first resurrection, at the destruction of Jerusalem. Our Lord's statement (John xii. 31, margin Revised Bible) should also be borne in mind in this connection—"Now is *a* judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out." *The use of the future tense shows that the event was yet to come, whilst the word "now" proves that it was nevertheless near at hand.*

"Weep for yourselves and for your children."—In His address to the women of Jerusalem, when on His way to crucifixion, Jesus implied that, *within the lifetime of themselves and their children*, a great day of wrath would come, when men would call on the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of the Judge. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but *weep for yourselves and for your children.* For *the days are coming* in which they shall say: 'Blessed are the barren.' . . *Then* shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us" (Luke xxiii. 28-30). With this, Rev. vi. 15, 16, should be compared, and the fact remembered that the author of the Apocalypse (writing

[1] "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such doth the Father seek to be His worhippers.

probably about 67 A.D.) repeatedly asserted that he was describing events which were to happen in what *was then* the near future (i. 1, 3, 19; xxii. 6, 10).

Within the lifetime of His judges.—Jesus, when on trial before the High Priest, told His judges that, later on, the relative positions of Himself and them would be reversed. Having been placed on His oath He most solemnly declared to them: "Hereafter (or henceforth) ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 64). The fact that these men were to *see* Christ *coming* (*i.e.*, as He came) is an indication that the event must have happened during their lifetime. According to 1. Thess. iv. 16,[1] no resurrection of the dead was to take place until *after* the Lord Himself had descended from heaven; and therefore *none of the dead* could see Him in His previous act of coming. This inference is confirmed by the meaning of the Greek phrase ἀπάρτι here rendered "hereafter" or "henceforth." When applied not to a continuous state of things, but to an act or event which is to take place once for all in the future, the word denotes the proximity of the event, and can only be adequately translated by some such phrase as "in the near future," "ere long."

[1] "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. *And the dead in Christ shall rise first.* Then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

"In the near future."—The passage (Matt. xxvi. 64) just referred to throws light on another verse (John i. 51), where the same word *ἀπάρτι* occurs in some ancient manuscripts. It suggests the probability of that verse also being a description of something that happened at the destruction of Jerusalem. Christ informs Nathaniel that "hereafter" (*i.e.*, in the near future) he and others[1] would *see* the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending, and descending on the Son of man. The omission there, in certain ancient manuscripts, of the word *ἀπάρτι* confirms the likelihood that this is the real meaning of the passage. The scribe was not aware that the second advent had occurred, and did not know of any event that had taken place "in the near future" to which the prediction could refer. Not understanding the appropriateness of the word *ἀπάρτι*, he omitted it.

Corroborative statements.—Some other sayings of Jesus Christ throw light upon the time of His second coming. (1) He taught the *nearness of judgment* by comparing those who listened to Him to offenders who were already on their way to appear before the magistrate and to receive sentence. He charged home upon His earthly contemporaries their consummate folly in that they were so wise in interpreting the signs of the weather, but did not recognize the signs of the momentous epoch

[1] *Ye* is plural.

at which they themselves were living. "Ye hypocrites, ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heavens; but how is it that ye know not how to interpret this time? And why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right? For as thou art going with thine adversary before the magistrate, on the way give diligence to be quit of him; lest haply he hale thee unto the judge, and the judge shall deliver thee to the officer, and the officer shall cast thee into prison. I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou have paid the very last mite" (Luke xii. 56-59). So also Matt. v. 25: "Agree with thine adversary *quickly* whilst thou art with him in the way." (2) The fiery judgment which was one purpose of our Lord's incarnation, is spoken of in another passage as being already well-nigh kindled. "I came to cast fire upon the land (*or* earth); and what will I, if it is already kindled?" (Luke xii. 49). (3) In the parable of the great supper (Luke xiv. 16-24), it is noticeable that no long interval separated the call to the guests and the commencement of the feast. The host "sent forth his servants *at supper-time* to say to them that were bidden: Come, for *all things are now ready*" (verse 17). (4) The use of the word *first* in Luke xvii. 25, does not seem to admit of a delay of 1800 years: "So shall the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." That only a brief

interval is implied will be seen by comparing such passages as Luke ix. 59, 61; and xxi. 9: "Suffer me *first* to go and bury my father." "I will follow thee, Lord, but *first* suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house." "When ye shall hear of wars and tumults, be not terrified: for these things must needs come to pass *first;* but the end is not immediately."

The inference to be drawn.—We know that it had been revealed to the aged Simeon that he should not see death until he had seen the first advent of the Messiah (Luke ii. 26). A candid consideration of the passages now quoted from the gospel narratives enables us to declare with equal certainty that 1800 years ago it was revealed on divine authority to our Lord's earthly contemporaries that some of them should in no wise taste of death until they had witnessed His second advent. *We may conclude with reasonable certainty that Christ's words have been correctly reported. It is admitted that belief in the immediateness of His return began to grow obsolete at the end of the first century; and it is clear that men of a subsequent generation who knew nothing of the event having been realised at the destruction of Jerusalem would not have gratuitously attributed to Jesus predictions which had apparently been falsified.* These predictions cannot therefore have been the invention of later ages; for they run counter to the ideas that have prevailed

on the subject ever since the destruction of Jerusalem. Thus the natural and inevitable inference is that Jesus taught not only that He would surely come back to judgment, but that He would do so within certain definite limits of time which coincide unmistakably with the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish dispensation. *The many times which His predictions on the subject are repeated and the very varied forms which they assume, make it certain from the point of view of historical science that such was His teaching.* On no subject are the words attributed to Him clearer or more emphatic. *Let anyone who denies that the signification now contended for as attaching to those words is their natural and common-sense signification, state in what plainer language and more varied ways this meaning could have been conveyed had it been really intended.* The belief that Christ's second advent, with its accompaniments of a resurrection and a judgment, took place at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, rests on precisely the same basis as the expectation of these events ever taking place; namely, on the plain, emphatic, and continually-repeated statements of our Lord and His apostles given beforehand, and unsupported as yet by any human record after the event.

Matters of fact are in question. *The silence of history proves nothing either way, it being equally impossible to prove from history that Jesus was not seen*

on the clouds of heaven in 70 A.D., and that a resurrection, a judgment, and the translation of living saints did not accompany His advent. He Himself predicted that these events would take place at the close of the Jewish dispensation. To Christian believers this affords the strongest possible presumption that they did take place, for to Christian believers His predictions are *history anticipated!* The *burden of proof* in the argument rests not on those who assert, but on those who deny, the past advent. An earnest study of the life of Jesus is calculated to beget such supreme confidence in Him that the fact that He often predicted His own resurrection (Matt. xvi. 21; xvii. 23; xx. 19; John ii. 19) becomes to many a certain proof that He did rise from the grave. A similar consideration fixes the time of the second advent; for, as with the case of the dying robber's entrance into Paradise on the very day of the crucifixion ("Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," Luke xxiii. 43)—*an event of the past of which we have not the faintest historical evidence*—our one all-sufficient source of information on the subject is the plain testimony of the Lord Jesus, given beforehand. This constitutes evidence of the surest kind; and with Christians, at any rate, should put an end to all doubt and all controversy on the matter. IPSE DIXIT. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but HIS WORDS SHALL NOT PASS AWAY (Matt. xxiv. 35).

To regard with suspicion His words or the record of His words is to destroy belief in a second advent at all. To deny the truth of His predictions because we are unable historically to verify a certain portion of them is simply to make manifest the shallowness of our faith in Him. To disprove the truth of those predictions would be to shake the Christian religion to its very foundations. Let God and God's Son be true, and, if need be, every mere man a liar!

CHAPTER IV.

The Silence of History.

The hiatus: 70—150 A.D.—Why has no record of the past second advent come down to us in history? We have first to remember the very remarkable and significant hiatus that occurs in early church history. The gospel of Mark was apparently left unfinished by the author; the last twelve verses having to be added by another hand. The narrative of the Acts of the Apostles ends abruptly, leaving us uncertain as to the fate of Paul and other prominent Christian workers. And indeed the annals of the Church, for nearly a century after the destruction of Jerusalem, are *almost a blank.*

In the introduction to his "History of the Eastern Church," Dean Stanley thus characterises the transition from the Christianity of the New Testament to that of the Apostolic Fathers:

"No other change equally momentous has ever since affected its fortunes, yet *none has ever been so silent and secret.* The stream, in that most critical moment of its passage from the everlasting hills to the plain below, is *lost to our view at the very point where we are most anxious to watch it.* We may hear its struggles under the over-arching rocks; we may catch its spray on the boughs that over-lap its course; but the torrent itself we see not, or see only by imperfect glimpses. *It is not so much a period for ecclesiastical history as for ecclesiastical controversy and conjecture.* A fragment here, an allegory

there; romances of unknown authorship; a handful of letters of which the *genuineness of every portion is contested inch by inch*; the summary examination of a Roman magistrate; the pleadings of two or three Christian apologists; custom and opinions in the very act of change; last but not least, the faded paintings, the broken sculptures, the rude epitaphs in the darkness of the catacombs;—these are the scanty, though attractive materials out of which the likeness of the early church must be reproduced, as it was working its way, in the literal sense of the word, 'under ground,' under camp and palace, under senate and forum. THIS CHASM ONCE CLEARED, *we find ourselves approaching the point where the story of the Church once more becomes history.*"

In his book "The Conquering Cross" (p. 41), Mr. Haweis, speaking of the period that immediately followed Nero's persecution of the Christians (64-68 A.D.), says:

"When the mist of blood and fire cleared from the spaces now occupied by St. Peter's and the Vatican, *the two great apostles Peter and Paul have disappeared* . . . During the Neronian persecution *Timothy has also vanished, and Barnabas* the son of consolation *no longer remains* to write conciliatory homiletics for Jewish and Gentile Christians."

The following passage from a review of Renan's "St. Paul" in the "Edinburgh Review," April 1870, also emphasises the exceedingly fragmentary character of early Church History:

"This volume—'The Life of St. Paul,'—takes us through the whole period of what we may call the ministry of the great apostle, embracing those all-important fifteen or sixteen years (45–61 A.D.) during which his three missionary journeys were undertaken, and the infant Church, with four bold strides, advanced from Jerusalem to Antioch, from Antioch to Ephesus, from Ephesus to Corinth, and from Corinth to Rome. *Once arrived there*, once securely planted in that central and commanding position, strange to say, *the church* with all its dramatic persons *suddenly vanishes from our view.* The densest clouds of obscurity immediately gather round its history, which our eager curiosity in vain attempts to penetrate. *It is gone, amid a wreath of smoke, as completely as when a train plunges into a tunnel.* The arrival of St. Paul at Rome marks for the history of the origin of Christianity the commencement of a profound night, illuminated only by the lurid fire of Nero's horrible festivities, and by the lightning flash of the Apocalypse. The history of St. Paul's life, and the history of the apostolic age, together abruptly end. Black darkness

falls upon the scene ; and a grim and brooding silence—like the silence of impending storm—holds, in hushed expectation of the 'day of the Lord,' the awestruck breathless church."

The cause of the hiatus.—Whence comes this remarkable gap in early Church history? It is natural to suppose that at the Lord's advent the sudden and simultaneous disappearance, throughout the world, of believers of the first rank would make a profound impression upon the Christians of a lower rank, who because of their unwatchfulness were left behind. There are those who maintain that this would at once have found a record in the annals of the Church. This is not quite certain, owing to the disturbed state of things that prevailed, and to the sudden withdrawal of the apostles. But granting that it was so, the fact remains that we have no church literature bearing date immediately after 70 A.D. If such literature ever existed, *did it perish accidentally, or was it intentionally destroyed?* Various considerations render possible the latter alternative. Church literature bearing date immediately after 70 A.D. may have been still in existence in the second and third centuries or even later. In it may have been recorded the profound impression made upon the surviving church by the disappearance of the saints in 70 A.D. In that case, knowing as we do the unworthy deeds of which, at various periods of the Christian era, priests and ecclesiastics have not infrequently proved themselves capable, it is no breach of

charity to suppose that *in the interests of priestcraft and ecclesiasticism the documents may have been suppressed by the dominant party in the church.*

The predicted secrecy of the event.—Beyond all question, there are also various indications to be found in the New Testament which prove that the advent was to be an occurrence of a more private and restricted character than is generally supposed. Christ plainly told His sorrowing disciples that a period was coming, after He had ascended to the Father (John xvi. 17) when He would make Himself visible to them, but *not to the world at large* (John xiv. 19, 21). According to the parable of the Ten virgins (Matt. xxv. 1-13), the Lord's advent was to have the *secrecy of an Eastern wedding.* The Bridegroom was to come not at midday, but at midnight, and not only the world at large but even the foolish virgins (that is, unwatchful and imperfectly sanctified believers) also were *to miss the sight of Him.* It was only to those believers who waited for Him that He was to appear a second time without sin unto salvation.[1] Without holiness (that is, entire sanctification) no man within the Christian church[2] should see the Lord (Heb. xii. 14). Christ was to come like *a thief in the night,*[3]

[1] Heb. ix. 28.

[2] Like all the New Testament epistles, the epistle to the Hebrews was addressed exclusively to believers.

[3] "Behold I come as a thief Blessed is he that watcheth" (Rev. xvi. 15). "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and

whose arrival is sudden and unlooked for, and perhaps *unknown and unsuspected* until after he has gone away again, carrying with him, it may be, *a few most precious jewels*,[1] Further, the words of the angels when they told the disciples that the Lord's return and descent from heaven was to resemble His departure and ascension (Acts i. 11) suggest that His second coming would not only be personal and visible, but also private and *restricted to a limited number of individuals;* even although *within the circle of those personally concerned* the prediction was realised that "every eye" should see Him (Rev. i. 7). The Transfiguration scene (Matt. xvii.; Mark ix.; Luke ix.) which prefigured the glories of the second advent, was hidden not only from the world, but also from the mass of Christ's disciples; being vouchsafed only to Peter, James and John, the elect among the elect. Elijah's translation, between which and the translation of the saints an analogy might be anticipated, was secret and hidden from all but Elisha, although afterwards recorded (2 Kings ii). Taking the evidence as a whole, we need not be surprised if it should prove true that the Kingdom of God came

thou shalt not know *what hour* I will come upon thee" (Rev. iii. 3). "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. v. 2). "If the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through" (Matt. xxiv. 43; Luke xii. 33).

[1] A thief who accomplishes his work with perfect success—*the ideal thief*—does it also with complete secrecy!

"not with observation"[1] (Luke xvii. 20). Thus when the Lord returned to fetch home to heaven His faithful servants, and to call to judgment the Jewish nation (that portion of humanity which was ripe for judgment), only those personally interested were cognisant of the occurrence. No one was permitted to be a mere outside spectator and reporter of that solemn and august interview between the Creator[2] and His creatures.

The necessary powers of perception.—The credibility of the event having taken place, in spite of the silence of the historian, may be illustrated as follows:—*Man's ordinary powers of perception do not exhaust the possibilities of the universe, nor even reveal to him all the realities immediately around him.* At the time of death, for example, persons sometimes see unearthly sights and hear unearthly sounds. They thus for the first time become cognisant of certain objective realities around them, of which ordinary mortals have no discernment, and of which even surviving friends who are present at the moment have no direct personal knowledge. And in everyday life, also, some men from exceptional natural endowment or from superior training of their senses, see and hear

[1] The verb παρατηρέω, from which the noun παρατήρησις here translated "observation" is derived, means to stand by and watch as an onlooker. Thus in Luke vi. 7, xiv. 1, the meaning obviously is that the enemies of Jesus *stood watching* Him.

[2] "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made which hath been made" (John i. 3). Compare Col. 1. 16: "All things have been created through Him."

much that entirely escapes the notice of others. The microscope, too, has revealed quite close at hand a world of marvels the existence of which was unsuspected before. But, further, there is no reason, in the nature of things, why we should not have had six or more senses, instead of only five. *These would have given us a vastly increased knowledge of the universe.* As the case now stands, there are many persons who have altogether exceptional powers of perception. It was specially granted to the Old Testament prophets to be cognisant of things around them which were real, and really present, and yet were unperceived by others. This wonderful power—*the gift of seership*—was perhaps part of the 'spirit' of Elijah, of which Elisha craved for himself a double portion as a legacy.[1] His master could not say, for certain, whether the request would be granted, but only knew that if Elisha could *see* his changed body[2] when he went away from earth, *this of itself would be an indication that he had what he desired.*[3] Accordingly, when the king of Syria sent soldiers to Dothan to seize Elisha, the prophet did not share in the alarm of his servant. *He could see something* which his servant could not see until the

[1] 2 Kings ii. 9.

[2] It is natural to suppose that, at the moment of Elijah's translation, a change came over his body similar to that which Paul spoke of as destined to come over the bodies of the living saints at the time of the first resurrection ("we shall all be *changed*" said the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 51).

[3] 2 Kings ii. 10.

moment came when in answer to Elisha's prayer "The Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings vi. 17). [See Appendix C.]

Coming to New Testament times, we find that at our Lord's baptism, Jesus *saw* (Matt. iii. 16; Mark i. 10), and John *saw* (John i. 32), the sky rent asunder, and the Holy Spirit descending, in a bodily form, like a dove. Yet apparently there were people standing around who *knew nothing of the marvellous occurrence* (Luke iii. 21). And when the great persecutor was suddenly brought to a standstill on the way to Damascus (Acts ix. 3), the risen Christ was really and objectively present. Saul *saw* Him and understood His words, and later on definitely based his apostolic authority on the fact that as truly as the rest of the apostles he had seen Jesus alive after His resurrection, and had received directly from Him his commission to the world.[1] But Saul's companions who travelled with him on that occasion, although they heard certain sounds, *yet not being immediately or personally concerned in the Lord's appearance*, did not see Christ and did not know that He

[1] "Am I not an apostle? *Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?*" (1 Cor. ix. 1). "Paul, an apostle, not from men, neither through man, but *through Jesus Christ*, and God who raised Him from the dead." "The gospel which was preached by me is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but *it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ* (Gal. i. 1, 11, 12).

was present.[1] *This clearly proves that Christ's resurrection-body could not be perceived with the ordinary eyesight.*

The narrow scope of the advent.—It is a fact of great significance that in the New Testament the second advent has a *far narrower scope* assigned to it than is usually supposed. Not the whole world, but only some believers, and only some unbelievers, are described as destined to be primarily, and, at once, affected by the event. Within the Christian church, it was only to those who *looked for Him* that He was to appear a second time without sin unto salvation (Heb. ix. 28). And whilst all the impenitent are one day to have *their exact deserts* rendered to them, it was the pronounced enemies of Jesus, and the cruel persecutors of His people, against whom eternal destruction was threatened at His second coming (2 Thess. i. 9). It was also *adversaries* whom the fiery indignation would devour (Heb. x. 27), and *the open and avowed enemies* of the cross of Christ, of whom we are told that *their end is destruction* (Phil. iii. 18).

Three sections of humanity.—In Palestine in 70 A.D. there were three classes of men: (1) The pronounced friends of Jesus—Christians of the first rank. In obedience to His instructions, they had

[1] So, also, when Stephen, at his martyrdom, *saw* Jesus standing at the right hand of God, there is every reason to believe that, whilst the sight was thus granted to the one man whom it was intended to comfort, it was withheld from the eyes of the unbelieving Jews whom it did not concern.

made their escape from the city at the first approach of the Roman army.[1] *They saw the Lord on the clouds of heaven*, for in that He came for the express purpose of giving them deliverance and rest they were *immediately concerned* in His appearance. But they were caught up to meet Him in the air, and were taken away to their heavenly home, and therefore could not record the event in any earthly history.

(2) The great mass of unbelieving Jews ("all the tribes of the land," Matt. xxiv. 30, and Rev. i. 7) and especially His judges (Matt. xxvi. 64) and those who pierced Him (Rev. i. 7). The unbelieving Jews were the open and avowed enemies of Jesus, and the cruel persecutors of His people. *They saw the Lord on the clouds of heaven*, for in that He came for the express purpose of calling them to judgment they were *immediately concerned* in His appearance. But they were destroyed and therefore did not live to tell the story.

(3) A section of humanity consisting of the Roman army and a minority of Jews who (being perhaps less guilty than the rest of their countrymen) were allowed to escape the general slaughter and go into captivity. Possibly also some Christians of the second rank (foolish virgins), who because of their unwatchfulness were left behind when their companions were caught up to meet the Lord

[1] Eusebius, Eccles. History, iii. 5. Josephus, Wars, ii. 19.

in the air. It is doubtful whether there can have been any such at Jerusalem itself. Let it be granted that some believers, contrary to the Lord's express command (Luke xxi. 20), may have stayed in the city after the first appearance of the Roman army. If, in that case, amid the horrors of the war, which lasted for three years and a half, they still retained faith in God, they must at the end have become *saints of a high order*. At any rate, the very fact that the third set of individuals remained on earth proves that they were *neither among the pronounced friends of Jesus Christ whom He came to fetch home to heaven, nor among His avowed enemies whom He came to judge and destroy*. Hence arguing by the analogy of Acts ix. 7, and vii. 55, we may reasonably infer that *not being immediately or personally concerned in His appearance, they were not cognisant of His presence*. It is worthy of special note that between His resurrection and ascension Jesus never made Himself visible to the world at large, and that even His disciples only saw Him at intervals. Hence many Christians believe that although His appearances between His resurrection and ascension were of course real and objective, yet a subjective qualification—the addition, so to speak, of an exceptional mental faculty, the opening of a special spiritual sense granted to some men but withheld from the rest of the world—was also essential to the perception of His resurrection-body. If this be so, it is

highly probable that *a similar subjective qualification* —and the quickening of a similar spiritual sense— was *essential to the perception of His resurrection-body at the second advent*, and that, as before, this subjective qualification was granted to a portion of mankind, but denied to the remainder. In that case it is difficult to discover any source from whence a record of Christ's second advent could find its way into human history.

The fact itself is certain.—Even if no explanation of the silence of history were forthcoming, no event of the past can be more sure to the Christian than the fact that our Lord personally returned to the earth at the close of the Jewish dispensation. Our knowledge of it rests not on ordinary human testimony, but on the clear, emphatic, and continually repeated predictions of Jesus, that such would be the case. *We cannot reasonably question the authenticity of these predictions when we remember* (1) *the number of times they are repeated in the records;* (2) *the great variety of language by which the same meaning is conveyed;* (3) *the certainty that writers of the second century would not have gratuitously attributed to Jesus words which had seemingly been falsified.*

CHAPTER V.

How the Event affected Countries Outside of Palestine.

At His first coming the Lord Jesus Christ confined His ministry to Jerusalem and the land of Palestine. In an important sense it was then true that He was "not sent save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."[1] At His second advent He was to come once again, apparently mainly as *King of the Jews.* Yet His visible presence was not to be limited to one country, but was to resemble the lightning which is seen in swift succession first in one place and then in another. "If, therefore, they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the wilderness; go not forth: Behold He is in the inner chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the east and *is seen* even unto the west, *so shall be the coming of the Son of man*" (Matt. xxiv. 26, 27). Indeed, throughout the New Testament we are taught that others besides the inhabitants of Palestine were vitally interested in His return to the earth. In all parts of the world the event was to bring judgment and *destruction* to

[1] Matt. xv. 24.

the enemies of the Christian faith, and deliverance and rest to those believers who, in anticipation of the occurrence, should be found living consecrated and watchful lives. How is this to be reconciled with the belief that the second advent was realised by our Lord's personal appearance on the clouds of heaven in 70 A.D.? The answer is partly found in the fact that, throughout the world, the bitterest enemies of Christianity were the Jews; and Josephus records that the outbreak of the war under Vespasian was the signal for the massacre, and almost the extermination, of the Jews in foreign cities.[1] Thus literally was Christ's prediction verified, that before the generation of men to whom He spoke passed away, wheresoever the Jewish carcass was, there would the (Roman) vultures be gathered together (Matt. xxiv. 28, 34).

But further, when Jesus came in 70 A.D., how did His advent affect the Christian church throughout the world? Relying on the predictions of Matt. xxiv. 31, 34 we reply that in the lifetime of some who had been His earthly contemporaries, the Son of man sent forth His angels and gathered His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. The 'wise virgins' who in ceaseless anticipation of His return had been living prayerful and consecrated lives were *translated*, being suddenly missing from their homes and businesses.

[1] Josephus, Wars, ii. 18.

Two men, for example, were at work in the field; one was taken[1] and one was left. Two women were grinding at the mill; one was taken and one was left (Matt. xxiv. 41). As in the case of Elijah (2 Kings ii. 16-18), they who thus mysteriously disappeared may have been long and earnestly searched for by the friends and acquaintances they left behind. But it is possible that never, in this world, was the faintest clue obtained, nor the faintest suspicion entertained as to what had really happened. The annals of the Church for nearly a century afterwards are almost a blank. For the rest, it is not difficult to explain why even the sudden and simultaneous disappearance of so many persons in those tumultuous times has found no record in secular history. These were not days of newspapers and printed books, and even the ability to write was rare. And in any case, the world's historians have been wont to hold everyday humanity very cheap, and to concern themselves exclusively with the doings and fortunes of the great and renowned among men. The primitive Christians were *a despised and hated sect.* They occupied *humble and obscure* positions in society, being drawn mainly from the ranks of the poor, of women, and of slaves. "Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble were called" (1 Cor. i. 26). God chose them that were *poor* as to

[1] Compare the word used in recording the translation of Enoch: "He was not, for God *took* him" (Gen. v. 24).

the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom which He promised to them that love Him (James ii. 5).

And *only some* of the believers, and these few in number, would be found to be *wise virgins*: Christians of the first rank, watchful, prayerful, earnest and enduring to the end. Jesus Himself had declared that ere that generation passed away the love of *the many* (*i.e.*, of the mass of His disciples) would wax cold (Matt. xxiv. 12, 34). In connexion with the parable of the importunate widow, He had asked the question: "Nevertheless, *when the Son of man cometh*, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8). In explaining the parable of the sower, He had clearly foretold that only a small minority of His followers would bring forth fruit to perfection (Matt. xiii. 23; Luke viii. 15). The sad degeneracy that was to come over the apostolic church in the 'last days' of the Jewish dispensation was repeatedly predicted in the epistles of the New Testament; and in some of the epistles is represented as having already taken place. The same state of things is revealed by the letters addressed by our Lord Himself (through John) to the seven churches of Asia, at the time when His advent lay in the immediate future. In every subsequent age, really saintly and *approximately Christlike* believers have formed but a small minority of the Christian church; and from the facts mentioned above we

know that this must also have been so in 70 A.D. It need not, therefore, excite surprise if, in those tumultuous times, the sudden and simultaneous disappearance from the earth of a few Christians, mostly poor and despised, was unrecorded by the secular historian. *The foolish virgins* were left behind; and perhaps only discovered later on when death introduced them also to the invisible world of spirits, that by their unwatchfulness they had sold their *birthright* as God's first-born children; had forfeited their crown of glory; and had passed upon themselves sentence *not* necessarily of eternal perdition, but certainly of eternal exclusion from the Kingdom of God.[1]

[1] Popular theology loses sight of the distinction which may be clearly traced in the New Testament between the two classes of Christian believers—spiritual and carnal—wise virgins and foolish virgins—between those who are sons of God and those who are but servants of God. Hence without scriptural warrant it is commonly held that however much or however little a man may struggle against evil and avail himself of the supernatural resources which God puts within his reach in this life, yet if he be a real Christian, the death of his body will work a miracle upon him and will for ever set him free from all defects of character and from all temptation. However true this may be of Christians of the first rank, there is no reason to suppose it to be true of those who have utterly failed to avail themselves of the supernatural resources that God has put within their reach in this life. Just as the Israelitish generation that came out from Egypt were for their unfaithfulness shut out from Canaan and compelled to wander afresh in the wilderness for forty years (an ordinary lifetime), so it may be that the 'foolish virgins' of 70 A.D. and of every subsequent age, besides being for ever shut out from the Kingdom of heaven and the marriage supper of the Lamb, have been obliged in another world to continue the conflict with evil.

CHAPTER VI.

How Christianity was Perpetuated.

The unwatchful Christians.—Christianity was perpetuated by means of believers of the second rank. They, when the Bridegroom came to fetch the 'wise virgins' home to heaven, were left behind on earth, and were for ever shut out from all share in the glory and blessedness of the Kingdom, because its advent found them, as death now finds many true Christians, lacking in earnestness and watchfulness.

The apostle John.— Although, speaking in a general way, it is here maintained that in 70 A.D., the best and noblest of the believers then alive were withdrawn from earth to heaven, yet *universal statements admit of individual exceptions.* It thus becomes possible and probable that the Apostle John, although perfectly qualified by his character to share at once in the glory and blessedness of Christ's kingdom, was yet specially exempted, and left behind on earth, for a time, in order to be to the world a spiritual guide and a fountain of pure Christian teaching. That John lived until the time of the advent in 70 A.D., and *yet survived it*, is rendered fairly certain (1) by the traditions which state

that he died in Asia Minor at the beginning of the second century; (2) by the evidence which identifies him with the author of the fourth gospel, and dates that book after the destruction of Jerusalem. It is also the only adequate explanation of a certain perplexing passage contained in the fourth gospel (xxi. 20-23). The other apostles rightly inferred from our Lord's words ("If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?") that John was likely to remain on earth until Christ's return; and they naturally imagined that if such should prove to be the case, it would exempt him from death. "This saying therefore went forth among the brethren that that disciple should not die." But as a matter of fact, there was *no real incompatibility* between his living until the second advent and subsequently dying. The word *until* does not always imply an absolute limit of time. Often it simply omits all reference to what is beyond; that being left an open question! It says "thus far," but it does not necessarily mean "no further." For instance, the fact that John the Baptist was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel (Luke i. 80) is quite consistent with his having also lived there afterwards. Paul's injunction to Timothy "*Till I come*, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching" (1 Tim. iv. 13) by no means implied that, on the apostle's arrival, Timothy was to cease to give attention to these matters! In the fourth

gospel, the beloved disciple corrects the hasty and erroneous inference of his fellow-apostles. "*Jesus said not unto him that he should not die*; but if I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee?"

If, when he wrote the fourth gospel, the author knew that the second advent had already taken place, then a divine restraint prevented him from recording the fact. *There have been other instances of such enforced silence.* Lazarus, on his return from the unseen world (John xi), if he remembered anything of his experiences there, apparently did not reveal them. Before the crucifixion, the disciples were repeatedly forbidden to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. Of the Transfiguration scene (Matt. xvii., Mark ix., Luke ix.), which prefigured the glories of the second advent, we know that, in obedience to a divine restraint put upon them, the three Apostles, on descending from the Mount, held their peace; and *told no man* (not even their fellow disciples) in those days any of the things which they had seen, until after He had risen from the dead. *God has His own time for truth to become known*, and thus it may often happen that facts of vast interest and importance which have been hidden from men for ages and generations, are at last proclaimed. This is further illustrated by the gradual process of scientific discovery. The study of nature is constantly revealing to men, seemingly for the first time, much that has existed since the Creation. If, in these

days, the fact that the second advent has occurred is now for the first time made sure to the Christian church, it may be that we by reason of our great nearness to the final judgment are more interested in the matter than the intervening generations have been.

The New Testament.—The knowledge of Christianity was maintained by the continued existence of the gospels and epistles of the New Testament. As an analogous fact, it is to be remembered that in modern times and in heathen countries Christianity has been known by means of the printed Bible to pervade districts which no living missionary of any sort had ever visited.

CHAPTER VII.

Other Difficulties.

Old Testament prophecies.—We freely admit that belief in the past second advent is inconsistent with some traditional explanations of the predictions of Daniel and other Old Testament prophets. This does not in the least shake our position. We dare not twist and torture the plain teaching of the Master Himself in order to bring it into agreement with traditional explanations of the Old Testament. If there is an apparent contradiction between the two, Christ must be to us the interpreter of Daniel, not Daniel the interpreter of Christ! For example, we cannot tell for certain what the abomination of desolation was, although in all probability it was something connected with the Roman army which besieged Jerusalem. Yet we do know that it must have come in the lifetime of the individuals whom Christ addressed. He did not say: "When *they* see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet;" nor "When the abomination of desolation *is seen*;" but He said: "When *ye* see the abomination of desolation."—The pronoun 'you' or

'ye' cannot be used to the exclusion of the individuals immediately addressed. Therefore we know that the abomination of desolation is not future, but past. In like manner, since in the nature of the case *there cannot be two seasons of unparalleled suffering*, it is absolutely certain that the time of awful distress predicted by Daniel (xii. 1) came at the close of the Jewish dispensation. In Matt. xxiv. 21, Jesus associated it with the abomination of desolation which those who listened to Him were to live to see (verse 15). It was something which would be surely realised ere that generation passed away (verse 34). It was amongst the signs by which they would know that He Himself was nigh, even at the doors (verse 33). By definitely connecting the abomination of desolation and the season of unparalleled distress with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., our Lord has for ever settled for us the date of the *end* of the 'seventy weeks' mentioned in Daniel ix. 24.

Owing to obscurities of language, and for other reasons, some parts of the Old Testament are exceedingly difficult to understand. But happily no such uncertainty attaches to the teaching of Jesus Christ which is our only standard of infallible truth. If by any possibility a real contradiction could be proved to exist between the Old and the New Testaments we should not need to doubt or hesitate as to our position with regard to them. The utterances of

Old Testament saints and seers have exceeding value for men in every age. But the teaching of our divine Master is of yet more priceless worth. The former may be compared to a gold mine ; the latter to the pure, unalloyed metal itself. Any theological doctrine or any interpretation of a passage of Scripture stands utterly condemned if it contradicts the simple and natural meaning of the language used by our Lord Himself.

Luke xxi. 24.—The report which the evangelist Matthew gives of our Lord's eschatological discourse (chapter xxiv.) seems to have been drawn up with the precision of a legal document to limit the fulfilment of the whole to the lifetime of Christ's earthly contemporaries and preclude the possibility of a double interpretation. It has been too readily assumed that Luke's narrative on the other hand expressly projects Christ's personal and visible reappearance into a more distant future. "There shall be great distress upon the land, and wrath unto this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations. *And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* And there shall be signs in sun and moon and stars . . . . for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And *then* shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke xxi. 23-27).

In "the Parousia" (page 428), Dr. Russell maintains that the treading down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles predicted in verse 24, found an exhaustive fulfilment in the fact that throughout the whole duration of the war—three years and a half—the holy city was tyrannized over by an armed mob of Zealots and Edomites (Josephus, Wars, iv. 5). In favour of this supposition it may be urged that it can scarcely be doubted that these are the people referred to in Rev. xi. 2: "The holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." Yet striking as is the suggestion, it is by no means clear that Luke xxi. 24 is to be explained in the same way. (1) The treading down of Jerusalem predicted our Lord cannot have gone on contemporaneously with the siege. *It was to follow the slaughter of the Jews and their being led captive into all the nations!* (2) It surely requires more than three years and a half for THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES to be fulfilled.

Yet by the repeated use of the pronouns *ye*, *you*, *your*,[1] and by the solemn statements of verses

[1] "Take heed that *ye* be not led astray. Go *ye* not after them. . . When *ye* shall hear of wars and tumults, be not terrified. . . . They shall lay their hands on *you*, and shall persecute *you*, delivering *you* up to the synagogues and prisons, bringing *you* before kings and governors for My name's sake. It shall turn unto *you* for a testimony. Settle it therefore in *your* hearts, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; for I will give *you* a mouth and wisdom which all *your* adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay. But *ye* shall be delivered up even by parents. . . . and some of *you* shall they cause to be put to death. And *ye* shall be hated of all men for My name's sake. And not a hair of *your* head shall perish. In *your* patience *ye* shall win *your* lives. But when *ye* see Jerusalem compassed with armies. . . . When these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up *your* heads, because *your* redemption

32, 33 ("*Verily I say unto you:* THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS AWAY TILL ALL THINGS BE ACCOMPLISHED. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but MY WORDS SHALL NOT PASS AWAY") the narrative in Luke, just as certainly and emphatically as in Matthew and Mark, teaches that the second advent was to take place in the lifetime of our Lord's earthly contemporaries. In the light of these facts it is reasonable and easy to believe that the words "*Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*" are to be regarded as being in a parenthesis. Jesus was *a Jew speaking to Jews* concerning events in which as individuals and as a nation, they were intimately concerned. In verse 24 He casts a single glance forward beyond the time of the destruction of Jerusalem to the end of the Gentile dispensation in which we are now living. But in verse 25 He takes up again the thread of the discourse thus momentarily interrupted.

Some apparently contradictory statements. — (1) "EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM."— "Behold He cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him,

draweth nigh. . . . Even so *ye* also, when *ye* see these things coming to pass, know *ye* that the Kingdom of God is nigh. . . . Take heed to *yourselves* lest haply *your* hearts be overcharged. . . . and that day come on *you* suddenly as a snare; for so shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of all the land (*or* earth). But watch *ye* at every season, making supplication, that *ye* may prevail to escape all these things that shall (Greek: SHALL SOON) come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

and all the tribes of the land (*or* earth) shall mourn over Him" (Rev. i. 7). This prediction is supposed by many to teach that the whole world without exception would see Christ at His second coming. If this be the real meaning of the verse, it conflicts with many passages in the New Testament, already quoted, which teach that the event was to be of a more private and restricted character. But the language of the Bible is to be interpreted according to the usages of everyday life. In ordinary speech such words as *all* and *every* are continually used in a sense short of absolute totality. They usually denote *the whole within certain well-understood and well-defined limits.* The blind man, on having his sight restored, saw *all* things clearly (Mark viii. 25). After the interview at Jacob's well, the woman of Samaria declared concerning Jesus: "He told me *all* things that ever I did" (John iv. 39). The apostles preached *everywhere!* (Mark xvi. 20).

The restricted sense in which the words "all" and "every" are continually used in everyday life render it at least possible that in Rev. i. 7, the meaning is that Christ would be seen by all whom His coming concerned personally. At any rate, by the use of the emphatic words "*Behold He cometh,*" John taught that the advent in question would occur in what was then the near future.

(2) THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS.—"Repent

ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus; whom the heaven must receive until the time of the restoration of all things whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began" (Acts iii. 19-21). It is supposed by some that in these verses Peter taught that the second advent would not take place until the end of the world. Yet when we carefully examine his words, we notice that the return of the Messiah and the coming of seasons of refreshing *were for the individuals addressed!* (1) It may be that the 'restoration of all things' is only another name for the 'new heavens' and the 'new earth' which are to come at the end of the now-existing Millennium (Rev. xxi). In that case the words "*whom the heaven must receive until the time of the restoration of all things*" find their fulfilment in the reign of Christ in heaven over the earth during the period that intervenes between His second and third advents. (2) More probably the reference is to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, in 70 A.D. This was the goal to which the prophets had looked forward. This was the period when all things that had been written in the Old Testament found at last an exhaustive realisation (Luke xxi. 22.) Our Lord Himself spoke of the

partial reformation wrought among the Jews by the preaching of John the Baptist as a restoration of all things.[1] With still greater force the words apply to that wondrous epoch, when the types and shadows of the Old Testament vanished, and were succeeded by permanent heavenly realities. In 70 A.D. believing Jews recovered more than had been lost before. The earthly Canaan, the earthly Jerusalem, the earthly temple, gave place to the heavenly. The throne of David was more than restored in the establishment of the heavenly Kingdom of David's greater Son.

(3) "BLESSED IS HE THAT COMETH."—"Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii. 38, 39). In these verses Christ seems to predict that at His second advent the Jews who were now rejecting Him, would welcome and accept Him. A multitude of other passages however point in the opposite direction. We therefore venture to suggest that here the words mean that on His return His enemies would be compelled *against their will* to admit that He who had come to them in the name of the Lord was indeed the Blessed One. The use of the pronouns 'you' and 'ye' seems to indicate a special reference

[1] "Elijah indeed cometh first and *restoreth all things*. But I say unto you that *Elijah is come*, and they have also done unto him whatsoever they listed" (Mark ix. 12, 13).

to the individuals to whom the words were immediately addressed.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Parable of Judgment (Matt. xxv).

By a process of reasoning the astronomer Adams discovered the planet Neptune before it had been seen by human eyes. *He knew that there must be such a planet, because its existence was essential for the explanation of other undoubted facts.* In like manner, although it cannot be proved from history that the Lord Jesus personally and visibly returned to the earth at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., yet relying on His solemn teaching we may be morally certain that He did so return. The past second advent is the key to the understanding of the whole New Testament. In the light of this one event a world of mystery vanishes and a new world of truth stands revealed.

For instance, there is the vexed question of Future retribution. In this case the past second advent goes far towards solving a problem which many thoughtful Christians have reckoned not capable of being solved. In Matt. xxv. 31-46, we have a detailed account of the judgment previously referred to in Matt. xvi. 27, 28, which was to take place when the Son of man came in glory with His

holy angels to render to every man according to his deeds. Our Lord had solemnly declared that some of those who listened to Him during His earthly ministry would live to *see Him thus coming in His Kingdom.* The parable of the Sheep and the Goats must therefore refer *not* to the world-wide judgment still future but to the spiritual judgment of the Jews, which followed the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.[1] This may seem irreconcilable with the use of the words "all nations" or "all the nations" (Matt. xxv. 32). Yet exactly the same words *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη* occur in 2 Tim. iv. 17, where the meaning obviously is *individuals out of every nation.* Paul, speaking of his first appearance before Nero, declares: "The Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that *all the Gentiles* might hear," *i.e.*, persons of various nationalities then present in Rome. Certain it is that the phrase conveyed a narrower signification to the Jews who first heard it than that which we have been accustomed to attach to it. It may have meant "all the tribes of Palestine," for Josephus uses the same word *ἔθνος*, when he speaks of the "nation" of the Galileans and the "nation" of the Samaritans.

[1] That His second advent was to be accompanied by a spiritual judgment is declared in various passages, *e.g.*, "Behold I come *quickly*, and My reward is with Me *to render to each man according as his work is.*"—Rev. xxii. 12. The parables of the Tares and of the Dragnet are a further proof that, at the close of the Jewish dispensation, a severance of the wicked from among the righteous was to take place and a harvest to be reaped. "The harvest is *the end of the age.*" "So shall it be in *the end of the age*" (Matt. xiii. 39, 49).

It is also worthy of remark that although our Lord bade His apostles make disciples of "all the nations" Peter did not know until several years afterwards that it was right and obligatory to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts x. 14). When found fault with for so preaching he did not reply as otherwise we should certainly have expected him to do: "*These are the very people to whom the Lord Jesus, in His parting words, commanded us to preach!*" An examination of the parable itself in the light of these facts will clear away various difficulties which are unanswered by any other interpretation, and will deepen the conviction that we have here an account of the spiritual judgment which took place at Christ's second advent in 70 A.D.

The division into two classes.—The separation of men, spiritually and morally, into two and *only two* classes is not true to human nature as we ordinarily find it. Human nature as we ordinarily find it is a strange admixture of good and evil. Little as theologians have recognized this truth, *the mass of men are neither saints nor devils!* Often the bad man is not so bad as he seems, and the good man is not so good. Some of our best hopes for the world are based on the fact that, in countries where the gospel has been preached, human society as generally constituted may be divided morally and spiritually into four classes. (1) Christians (a small minority) who are living really saintly and

approximately Christlike lives—sons of God without rebuke—the light of the world and the salt of the earth. (2) Christians (the majority) who are real believers and true servants of God, yet having many faults unconquered, and living, it may be, very inconsistent lives. Their experience has been aptly portrayed in Romans vii., but they have not yet attained to the full blessedness and complete liberty described in Romans viii. The good which they would, they do not, and the evil which they would not, that they practise. They delight in the law of God after the inward man ; but they find a mighty principle of evil still at work within them, warring against the Christ and still enslaving them (Romans vii. 19, 22, 23). (3) Unbelievers (the majority) who, like the young ruler whom Jesus loved, lead outwardly moral lives and have in them exceedingly much that is good. (4) Hardened unbelievers (a small minority) in whom all goodness is tending to become extinct. They sin out of sheer wickedness and perversity, and are in danger of becoming children of the devil.

We are *never at a standstill* spiritually and morally. Every experience in life has an influence, perceptible or imperceptible, on our characters ; and none leaves us quite the same men as it found us. The struggle between the principles of good and evil within us cannot cease until one or the other gains a complete victory. Thus each indi-

vidual must, ultimately, either attain to the perfect image of the Christ, or sink into complete and therefore *irrecoverable* evil. Then we are *ripe for final judgment and final separation.* This explains the division of men, according to the parable, into two and *only two* classes. Suffering either melts a man's heart or hardens it; and the intense unparalleled sufferings which fell on believers and unbelievers alike, in the last days of the Jewish dispensation, must have made their characters develop very quickly,[1] and have gone far to turn at last every individual either into *a saint*—fit to be welcomed to the heavenly Kingdom, the Father's house of many mansions; or into *a devil*—fit only to be burned up and consumed in the quenchless flames of Gehenna.

The test of character.—*Their treatment of the Lord's suffering brethren* is the standard or criterion by which, in the parable, men are judged and their true characters made manifest. This was a test peculiarly appropriate to the times of fierce persecution which accompanied the last years of the Jewish dispensation. But it is hard to understand its application to the world in general, when we remember the myriads in Africa, India, China, and elsewhere who have lived and died without ever

[1] "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness *yet more.* He that is righteous, let him do righteousness *yet more*" (Rev. xxii. 11). Compare 2 Tim. iii. 13: "Evil men shall *wax worse and worse.*"

having seen a Christian, or even heard the name of the Saviour.

The severity of the punishment.—In the parable, those on the left hand are commanded to depart into the eternal fire. A divine instinct within us revolts against the conclusion that this is to be the indiscriminate destiny of all men, in every period of the world's history, who have died without cherishing faith in the historic Christ. Yet the awful severity of the sentence, and the apparent finality of the doom pronounced, harmonize well with the belief that the parable describes the retribution meted out to that evil generation of the Jews, and with the reception of the Church of the Firstborn into the heavenly Kingdom (Heb. xii. 23). It is true that wrongdoing of every description carries with it, when unrepented of, its own most bitter curse and suffering. Yet we have to recognize that besides the sin against the Holy Spirit (Matt. xii. 31) involved in the deliberate and persistent rejection of God's Messiah, and constituting a sin *unto death* (1 John v. 16) which can never be forgiven, there are also offences, committed in ignorance and frailty, which are not sins unto death. The sharp distinction between the two sorts of punishment that await the impenitent is also seen from our Lord's words in Luke xx. 18: "Every one that falleth on that stone shall be broken in pieces, but"—more awful destiny still—"on whomsoever it

shall fall, *it shall scatter him as dust.*" It is quite certain that the most terrible denunciations of woe recorded in the New Testament, denunciations which it has been usual to apply to all unbelievers alike, were in reality directed against a specially guilty and hardened class of sinners. Thus, whilst we are repeatedly taught that God will render to each man according to his deserts, yet we know that it was to be *more tolerable* for Sodom and Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum (Luke x. 13-15). Of Judas alone, who had come to be a complete incarnation of evil,[1] is it recorded that it would have been well for him if he had not been born (Matt. xxvi. 24). It was false and hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees who were designated "offspring of vipers" (Matt. xxiii. 33) and "children of the devil" (John viii. 44), and solemnly warned that they were in danger of falling under the severest form of God's judgment—*the judgment of Gehenna.* It was the pronounced *enemies* of Jesus and the cruel persecutors of His people against whom eternal destruction was threatened at His second advent (2 Thess. i. 9). Further, in the parable of the pounds (Luke xix. 27), those whom the nobleman on His return as King ordered to be slain were men who *hated Him* and were in definite and insolent rebellion against His authority. It was also *adversaries*

[1] "And after the sop then entered Satan into him" (John xiii. 27). "Did I not choose you the twelve, and one of you is *a devil?*" (John vi. 70.)

whom the fiery indignation would devour (Heb. x. 27), and the open and avowed *enemies* of the cross of Christ of whom we are told that their end is destruction (Phil. iii. 18). And here, in the parable of the sheep and the goats, the EXCEPTIONAL WICKEDNESS of the last generation of the Jewish nation explains the *awful severity* of the sentence pronounced upon them and the apparent finality of their doom. These men did not sin in blind ignorance. If JESUS HIMSELF had not previously come and spoken unto them and done among them works which none other ever did, their sin might not have been of the heinous and unpardonable character that it was (John ix. 41 ; xv. 22, 24 ; xvi. 9). But, as things were, they had not the faintest excuse nor palliation for their final rejection of Him. The times of ignorance God in His infinite mercy overlooks (Acts xvii. 30). But this was the judgment that *light came into the world*, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, because *their works were evil* (John iii. 19). Our Lord's contemporaries had fondly hoped, and passionately desired, that the Christ at His coming would prove a great earthly King. Cherishing this expectation, it was at first *only natural* that they should be shocked and disappointed by the appearance of a Messiah of such a different sort. Neither God nor man would have judged them severely merely because at first they were disposed to reject Jesus. But the

lives and ministries of Himself and His apostles completely changed the aspect of the matter. JESUS HIMSELF was—as He has been ever since—*the one unanswerable proof of His own divine mission.* As they listened to Him all bare Him witness and marvelled at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth (Luke iv. 22), and they were compelled to admit: "Never man so spake" (John vii. 46). The worst taunt which his fellow-townsmen at Nazareth could bring against Him, after narrowly watching His daily life for thirty years, was that He was *a poor man*—a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter (Matt. xiii. 55-57). He boldly told His bitterest enemies that He always did the divine will (John viii. 29), and He challenged them in vain to convict Him of a single sin (John viii. 46). Having been gradually made to see the truth concerning Him by the Holy Spirit within them (Matt. xii. 31) for them to hate Him (John xv. 23) was to hate God and all goodness, and definitely to reject Him was definitely to reject Him that sent Him (Luke x. 16, Revised Bible). *They who had seen Him, had seen the Father!* (John xiv. 9). They were thus in open revolt against God's Messiah. Not in ignorance but out of sheer wickedness and perversity they had resisted the evidence furnished them by the life and miracles and teaching of Jesus and His apostles and by the witness of the Holy Spirit in their own souls.

They had deliberately rejected and murdered Him whom many of them in their secret hearts had been compelled to recognize as the embodiment of truth and goodness. They had also cruelly persecuted to the death a multitude of His innocent and saintly followers. The Jewish historian Josephus, writing eighteen hundred years ago, describes the mass of his fellow-countrymen as having been *far more ungodly than the people of Sodom.* He expresses his conviction that if the Romans had not opportunely come and destroyed them, the earth would have been likely to open and swallow them up, or another deluge might have been expected to sweep them away (Wars, v. 10. 5; 13. 6; vii. 8. 1). Jesus also in the parable of the Sower (Matt. xiii) had plainly taught that in the case of the majority of His contemporaries the good impression and moral reformation produced by His teaching would prove temporary. On another occasion He had predicted that, as time went on, their condition would come to resemble that of a man possessed by eight evil spirits (Matt. xii. 45).[1] The parable of judgment thus viewed throws great light on the problem of future punishment, and has solemn significance for humanity in every age.

(1) **It increases the certainty of retribution.**—In John v. 29 ("The hour cometh, in which

[1] The angel *speaking of the destruction of ancient Jerusalem* cried with a mighty voice, saying: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become *a habitation of demons* and *a prison of every unclean spirit*" (Rev. xviii. 2).

all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have practised ill unto the resurrection of judgment") and Rev. xx. 12 (When 'the thousand years' were finished, "I saw the dead—the great and the small—standing before the throne") we have predictions of a world-wide resurrection and a world-wide judgment yet to come. But even if these predictions had been lacking, the fact that God has punished sin in the past would be an indication that He will surely do so in the future. If this parable describes the judgment of the last generation of the Jewish people, then it takes its place along with the deluge and the destruction of Sodom and the cities of Canaan and with a thousand other events in history in impressing upon us the absolute certainty of the fearful retribution which always pursues impenitent sinners. (It is to be remembered that we are deterred from wrong-doing far more by the *certainty* of punishment than by its severity.)

(2) **Some men for ever lost.**—By proving that some men are for ever lost, the parable is fatal to the doctrine of final Universal restoration. These Jews involved themselves not only in fearful suffering but also in irreparable loss and ruin. There is not one of us who may not be guilty of the same mad folly, if, like them, we persistently sin against light and knowledge; and quenching within us the

witness of the Holy Spirit deliberately harden ourselves in rebellion against God's Messiah. "Be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will He spare thee. Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Romans xi. 21, 22).

(3) **Being burnt up as refuse.**—The mention of an eternal (or age-long) fire does not necessitate belief in never-ending suffering. The literal Gehenna, or Valley of Hinnom, with its quenchless flames, was a receptacle just outside Jerusalem for what was utterly bad and worthless. Rubbish and refuse were cast therein, not for their own sake to be purified as gold is purified of its dross but in order that by their complete destruction the city as a whole might be rendered clean and sweet. In like manner it is natural to infer from this parable, and from Matt. xxiii. 33 ("Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall *ye* escape the judgment of Gehenna?") that all goodness and every remnant of a better nature became extinct in the unbelievers of the last generation of the Jewish nation. They had completely silenced within them the Spirit of God, and they thus became as the refuse and offscouring of the world. At this, the first judgment, they were cast into the fire of the spiritual Gehenna, not for their own sake, nor that they might be perpetually

tortured; but in order, without further prolonged delay, to rid the universe of their existence.[1] The name "Valley of Slaughter" given in Jerem. vii. 32, and xix. 6, to the Valley of Hinnom, and the use in the New Testament[2] of such phrases as "the furnace of fire," "destruction," "a consuming fire," "the lake of fire," "the second death," "perishing," also points strongly to the probability of *fearful anguish*, followed by *extinction of being*, as the doom that awaits impenitent sinners who prove themselves utterly and therefore irremediably bad.

(4) **Yet many other degrees of guilt and punishment.**—"That servant which knew his Lord's will and made not ready nor did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he which knew not and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom they commit much of him will they ask the more" (Luke xii. 47, 48).[3] This principle

[1] Compare 1 Kings xiv. 10: "I will utterly sweep away the house of Jeroboam, *as a man sweepeth away dung, till it be all gone!*"

[2] "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and *shall cast them into the furnace of fire*" (Matt. xiii. 41, 42). "In *flaming fire*, rendering vengeance to them that know not God and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus; who shall suffer punishment, even *eternal destruction* from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might" (2 Thess. i. 8, 9). "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29). "Death and Hades were cast into *the lake of fire*. This is *the second death*, even the lake of fire" (Rev. xx. 14).

[3] That there will be degrees of future retribution exactly corresponding to degrees of guilt, our Lord also taught in Matt. v. 22: "I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of

forbids us to regard utter destruction as being necessarily the fate of all who die in unbelief, for all are not so monstrously wicked as that generation of Jews. Lack of sympathy with Christianity as it is humanly presented to us does not in every case amount to deliberate rejection of the Saviour Himself. Unbelief and wrongdoing always involve us in suffering and loss, but God is pitiful and long-suffering towards men who offend mainly in ignorance. He is a consuming fire only towards those whose sins, by being knowingly persisted in, have ceased to have anything of the character of disease and misfortune, and have become heinous by being made the deliberate choice of the individual. *The life to come is the exact counterpart of the life that now is. An impenitent sinner reaps just what he has sown.* The law of few or many stripes is fatal to the theory of Conditional Immortality which regards utter destruction as the doom which awaits all impenitent sinners alike. The fact of the past second advent establishes on a firm Scriptural basis the Wider Hope. We may confidently anticipate the final salvation and restoration of the majority of men. Yet comparatively few will share in the full glory and blessedness of the Kingdom of heaven. As in the past, so now, and so in the future, some may resist all that even God

the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of *the council.* And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of *the Gehenna of fire.*"

Himself, in this or any world, can do for their salvation. We cannot but fear that they who thus prove themselves utterly and irreclaimably bad will be for ever lost, and will pass out of existence. We are therefore compelled to definitely stop short of Universalism.

CHAPTER IX.

The Revelation.

The date.—A difference of opinion exists as to whether the Apocalypse was written before or after the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D). Epiphanius ascribes the book to the reign of Claudius (54 A.D). The Syriac version asserts that John was banished to Patmos under Nero (64 to 68 A.D.), and Tertullian synchronizes the banishment of John with the martyrdom of Peter and Paul under Nero. An ancient Latin fragment, quoted in Stuart's Apocalypse, i. 266, implies that the Revelation is of an earlier date than the last of the Pauline epistles. "Paul, following the order of *his own predecessor John*, wrote to only seven churches by name." The testimony of Irenæus (Heres v. 30, quoted by Eusebius iii. 18; v. 7) is as follows: "We do not venture to affirm anything with certainty respecting the name of the Antichrist. For were it necessary that this name should be clearly announced to the present age, it would have been declared by him who saw the Revelation. For it is not long since he (*or* it) was seen, but almost within our own generation about the end of Domitian's

reign." The last sentence is ambiguous, for there is nothing in the Greek to show whether Irenæus meant that *that which was seen* in the reign of Domitian was the Apocalypse, or John himself! Professor Cowles, of Oberlin, has pointed out that the *general sense* of the passage requires the latter supposition. The argument is that it would not have been wise nor safe to give the name of the Antichrist so long as Nero lived. But John survived until the reign of Domitian, when Nero had been dead for thirty years. If now, in the time of Irenæus, the name might be proclaimed without imprudence, the same had been true of the time of Domitian, *and John would have proclaimed it himself!* He did not do so; for though Nero was dead, yet Rome still lived, a persecuting power. "John was wisely silent," argues Irenæus, "let us be wisely silent also."

The opinion of Victorinus, Eusebius and Jerome that John's banishment to Patmos took place in the reign of Domitian (96 A.D.), and that the apostle then wrote the Revelation, *does not constitute independent evidence*, but rests on what was probably a misunderstanding of the words of Irenæus. And even if the latter really meant to assign this late date to the book, it is easy to over-estimate the importance of his testimony on the subject. John may have been exiled to Patmos on more than one occasion, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that

he wrote the Apocalypse whilst suffering a previous banishment thither under Nero. At any rate, what is technically called the *internal evidence*, that is, the evidence furnished by the contents of the book itself, points conclusively to its having been penned previously to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Why written in cipher.—The symbolic form in which the Revelation was given is a strong argument for the earlier date. More than once, it is implied that the Christians to whom the book was originally addressed were intimately concerned in the events which it describes. A special blessedness also belonged to those of them who diligently made themselves acquainted with its contents, and were willing to be guided by its teachings (i. 3; xxii. 7). It was therefore of great importance for these first readers of the book to obtain a clear understanding of its meaning. Hence, it is certain that, in no case, would the plain language of every-day life have been needlessly departed from, nor obscure words or figures of speech needlessly introduced. How then is the symbolic form of the Apocalypse to be explained? If we are obliged to accept the supposed testimony of Irenæus that it was written in 96 A.D. no full answer to this question seems possible. But assuming that the book was written just before the outbreak of the Jewish war in 66 A.D., the parallel presented by Christ's use of parables at once suggests the explanation. One

of the reasons why our Lord employed parables in His public teaching was undoubtedly to hide His meaning from certain unworthy persons amongst those who listened to Him,[1] Here is the manifest explanation of the symbolic form in which the contents of the Apocalypse were given to the world. There is very great likelihood that this was adopted in order *to hide the meaning from outsiders.* And even if this had not been the particular form in which the Revelation was divinely communicated to John, it is a form which, under the circumstances, he might rightly have adopted without laying himself open to a charge of cowardice. If, in modern times, a prophet were divinely commissioned to rebuke some tyrannical ruler for his sins, and yet, from dread of the personal consequences to himself, neglected to do so, he would, beyond doubt, be false to his duty. But suppose he were only bidden to describe to his fellow Christians, for their exclusive benefit and guidance, events in the immediate future in which the tyrannical ruler was to act a leading part. It would then be from no unworthy fear of man, but from a lawful desire to avoid needlessly compromising them and himself with the government of the country, and needlessly endangering their lives and his own, if he were to address them in some foreign

[1] "And His disciples asked Him what this parable might be. And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; but to the rest in parables; that seeing *they may not see*, and hearing *they may not understand*" (Luke viii. 9, 10).

language unintelligible to the bystanders ; or were to write his message in a cipher of which only he and they possessed the key. Now, in spite of the author's repeated statements to the contrary, it is commonly believed that the Revelation describes events which, eighteen hundred years ago, were to come to pass in what was then the remote future. If this were really so, there is no apparent reason why the contents of the book should not have been expressed in the plain language of everyday life. But the Roman empire was at least as absolute a despotism as any that now exists ; and Nero was a fearful monster, whose misdeeds cast into the shade the crimes of modern tyrants. Therefore, as a matter of fact, an excellent reason exists for the Revelation having been communicated in the form of visions, and for the book itself having been written in symbolic language. This language was, at the time, absolutely unintelligible to the enemies of the Christian faith. Succeeding generations of men have also been without the key to the meaning of the book. But, in the nature of the case, the primitive Christians, who were more immediately concerned and to whom the book was originally addressed, must have possessed that key.

The temple still standing.—The city of Jerusalem and the temple are spoken of as being still in existence (Chap. xi. 1, 2, 8.) It is incredible that if Jerusalem had been a heap of ruins, the

apostle would have received a command to measure the temple, and should represent the holy city as being about to be trodden down under the feet of the Gentiles.

Parallels to the teaching of Jesus.—There is also a manifest identity of some events described in the Apocalypse with some that had been predicted by our Lord Himself as destined to occur within certain narrow limits of time.

(I) THE CONDITION OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA (chap. ii. and iii.) proves that they were exposed to much persecution; false teachers had appeared among them, and the love of very many believers had waxed cold; a state of things exactly corresponding to what Jesus had predicted would happen in the lifetime of His earthly contemporaries. (Matt. xxiv.)

(II) THE AVENGING OF GOD'S ELECT. Rev. vi. 9; Luke xviii. 7.

(III) PHYSICAL CONVULSIONS. Rev. vi. 12; xvi. 1; Matt. xxiv. 29.

(IV) HIDING IN THE ROCKS AND CAVES. Rev. vi. 15; Luke xxiii. 30.

(V) THE COMING OF THE MILLENNIUM, OR "KINGDOM OF GOD." Rev. xi. 15; xii. 10; xx. 3, 4; Mark i. 15.

(VI) THE TIME OF THE DEAD TO BE RAISED. Rev. xi. 18; xx. 4-6; John v. 25.

(VII) THE BINDING OF SATAN. Rev. xx. 2; Matt. xii. 29, 28.

(VIII) THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB (Rev. xix. 7, 17) is represented in Luke xiv. 17 as about to begin.[1]

(IX) THE HARVEST OF THE LAND AND THE VINTAGE OF THE LAND, Rev. xiv. 14-20. THE WHEAT AND THE TARES, Matt. xiii. 30.

(X) FLEEING TO THE WILDERNESS, Rev. xii. 6. FLEEING ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS, Matt. xxiv. 16.

(XI) SEALING THE SERVANTS OF GOD IN THEIR FOREHEADS, Rev. vii. 1-3. GATHERING THE ELECT FROM THE FOUR WINDS, Matt. xxiv. 31. "Not a hair of your head shall perish," Luke xxi. 19.

(XII) Here too may be noted the manifest identity of the events described in Rev. xx. 1-11, and Dan. xii. But *since there cannot be two periods of unparalleled suffering* we know that Jesus predicted that Dan. xii. would be realised ere that generation passed away (Matt. xxiv. 21, 34).

To be immediately fulfilled.—But further, the writer of the book of Revelation stands committed to the constantly repeated statement that he is describing events which were to happen in what *was then* the immediate future (things which must shortly come to pass, i. 1 and xxii. 6; the things which shall be—or as the original Greek has it, are SOON TO HAPPEN—hereafter, i. 19; the time is at

[1] "At supper time." "Come, for all things are now ready."

hand, i. 3 and xxii. 10.[1] The book opens with a clear and emphatic declaration of the speedy accomplishment of the momentous events which it predicts, and it closes in the same way. And chief amongst the events predicted and declared to be then on the eve of taking place, was the advent of the Lord Jesus Himself, belief in the immediateness of which began to grow obsolete at the end of the first century. (Behold He cometh, i. 7 ; Behold I come quickly, iii. 11, and xxii. 7, 12 ; Behold I come as a thief, xvi. 15 ; Surely I come quickly, xxii. 20).

These emphatic and reiterated statements of the inspired penman are fatal to the date (96 A.D.) commonly accepted (which rests mainly on the supposed authority of Irenæus). They show conclusively that unless the book has been wofully falsified by subsequent events, it must have been written before and not after 70 A.D. For the argument stands as follows :—If the earlier date be admitted, the Revelation is seen in its true character as an expansion of Christ's prophetic discourse delivered on the Mount of Olives (Matthew xxiv., xxv). Then, up to the beginning of the twentieth chapter, its predictions find an exhaustive fulfil-

[1] The predictions of Daniel had to do with the remote future, and did not immediately concern his contemporaries. *The meaning was therefore to remain hidden until near the appointed time of fulfilment.* "Thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end!" On the other hand, the predictions of the Revelation were to be realised in the immediate future and intimately concerned the first readers of the book. *The meaning was therefore to be clear to them from the first.* "Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for *the time is at hand!*"

ment in the transactions that accompanied and immediately followed the destruction of Jerusalem, and the title of the book might appropriately have been "the doom of Jerusalem." But, on the other hand, no one supposes that immediately after 96 A.D., Christ visibly returned to the earth; or that the rest of the events described by John as being at the time he wrote on the point of accomplishment were then realised. If, therefore, trusting to the slender evidence supposed to be furnished by Irenæus who did not write till a hundred years afterwards, we still adhere to the later date, reason and common sense will then compel us to conclude that the predictions of the Apocalypse have been falsified by time.

Referred to in Hebrews and 1st Peter.—It is likely that at least two other New Testament authors who wrote their epistles in the last days of the Jewish dispensation and before the destruction of the Jewish temple (Hebrews i. 2; ix. 8; 1 Peter iv. 7) had already seen and read the Revelation. Thus in the mention of the city that hath "the foundations" whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews xi. 10, Revised Bible), we have a manifest reference to Rev. xxi. 14: "the wall of the city had twelve foundations." And the account of Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem given in the same epistle (Heb. xii. 22) agrees so minutely with the description thereof in the Reve-

lation (xiv. 1-5) that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the former has been directly derived from the latter. Of still greater interest and importance is the parallel between Rev. vi. 9-11 and 1 Peter iv. 6. In the Apocalypse the martyred saints are represented as crying out to the Lord from beneath the altar, and enquiring how long it will be ere their murderers are judged and punished (compare Luke xviii. 7). In reply, they receive white robes as an outward declaration of their own justification and acceptance with God, and are comforted with the information that judgment will now tarry but a short time, during which they will enjoy rest. It is almost certain that Peter, before writing the first epistle that bears his name, had already become familiar with this passage of the Apocalypse, and that his readers were also acquainted with it. He makes manifest allusion to these martyred saints in the passage (iv. 6) where he strives to encourage Christians amid their terrible sufferings by referring to certain of the dead to whom a "gospel" (or glad tidings) had been vouchsafed, assuring them that, though they had been condemned in the flesh by man's judgment, they were to live in the spirit by God's judgment.

It is also probable that the apostle James had read the book of Revelation before he wrote his epistle, for in ch. i. 12 (Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been

approved, he shall receive the CROWN OF LIFE, *which the Lord promised to them that love Him*) he seems to be alluding to the promise contained in Rev. ii. 10 (Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the CROWN OF LIFE).

CHAPTER X.

The Revelation (*continued*).

The plan of the book.—In "the Parousia," Dr. Stuart Russell points out that it is a great mistake to regard the Apocalypse as "an intricate maze, without any intelligible plan, ranging through time and space, and forming a chaos of heterogeneous ages, nations, and incidents, when in reality there is no literary composition more methodical in its arrangement and more artistic in its design." He shows that among the remarkable features of the book is the fact that each division ends with a catastrophe representing either an act of judgment or a scene of triumph, and that just as Pharaoh's dream was one, although to make its lesson doubly sure it was repeated and seen under two different forms,[1] so also the several visions of the Apocalypse are not really consecutive, but run as it were parallel to each other, and merely give different aspects and varied repre-

[1] "And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharoah twice, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass" (Gen. xli. 32). Compare Joseph's double dream (Gen. xxxvii), Gideon's double sign (Judges vi. 36-9), the double vision of Dan. ii. and vii., and our Lord's use of more than one parable to illustrate different sides of one and the same truth (as in Luke xv).

sentations of the same set of events. In the last section of his most able and fascinating book Dr. Russell gives numerous extracts from the Jewish historian Josephus. These make it morally certain that in the transactions that accompanied and immediately followed the siege and destruction of Jerusalem the Apocalypse from the fourth chapter up to the beginning of the 20th chapter received an exhaustive fulfilment; and that much that Josephus afterwards recorded was seen in vision by John, and in the Revelation was described by him in pictorial language before it actually took place. In justification of this belief it is impossible within our present limits to do more than recall some of the remarkable parallels to the Apocalypse which are to be found in Josephus. *It is of course to be remembered that the Revelation describes both heavenly and earthly things, and that so far as history written after the event is concerned we have no independent record of things that then happened in the spiritual world, and only a fragmentary record of what happened on earth.* It is therefore quite impossible to find in the historian Josephus a counterpart to every incident of the Revelation. The resemblances, however, between the two are so numerous and so striking as to afford the strongest presumptive evidence that they are describing the same series of events.

The seven seals.—At the opening of the first

of the seven seals we have probably a symbolic representation of the outbreak of the Jewish war under Vespasian, in the reign of Nero, 66 A.D. The first horse is *white*, for little or no blood is shed at first; and the rider is armed with a bow, a weapon used at a distance. Yet already the issue of the war is not doubtful. The Roman warrior "came forth conquering and to conquer." And soon blood begins to be freely shed. The second horse is *red*. Peace is taken from the land which is the scene of the war, and the whole country is soon in a fierce tumult. The Romans gain an additional advantage by civil war springing up—the Jews fight among themselves. The "great sword," which had now taken the place of the bow, finds its explanation in the fact that the war soon became a hand-to-hand conflict, and terrible was the slaughter that followed.

With the opening of the third seal a *black* horse is seen, symbolising the horrors of famine which ere long made themselves felt. Josephus (Wars 5. 10. 2) records the scarcity and dearness of food, and how fearfully the inhabitants of Jerusalem suffered from hunger. He also records that John of Gischala, one of the rival leaders of the people, not only seized the sacred vessels of the temple, but also distributed among his adherents the wine and oil which the priests used for pouring over the sacrifices (Wars 5. 13. 6). Striking is the parallel between these facts and Rev. vi. 6, especially in

the translation preferred by the American revisers, "a quart of wheat for a shilling. and three quarts of barley for a shilling"—implying great scarcity; the revisers remark—"*and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.*"

In the fourth horse, which was of a *pale* color, and the name of whose rider was Death (Rev. vi. 8) there is apparently a statement of the intensified horrors of the seige of Jerusalem, as to which we have abundant evidence in Josephus (Wars 5. 12. 3; and 5. 13. 7). In the account of what followed the opening of the sixth seal we have, in the language of gorgeous Oriental poetry, a description of physical convulsions similar to that given by our Lord in Matt. xxiv. 29, and which (five verses later on) He solemnly declared would take place ere the generation to whom He spoke passed away. The term "kings of the land (*or* earth)," Rev. vi. 15, is applied by Peter to the rulers of the Jews (Acts iv. 26). The scene that follows finds its explanation in the fact that the limestone hills of Palestine are honeycombed with caverns which from time immemorial have been the dens of robbers and the shelter of fugitives. It is remarkable that Josephus records that *these caverns and subterranean passages formed the last refuge and hiding place of vast numbers of the Jews* after the capture of the city (Wars 6. 7. and 9; and 7. 2. 2). And if they sought to hide themselves thus from man, they may well have

tried in a similar way to hide themselves from the divine Judge. Certain it is that on His way to crucifixion Jesus had declared to the women of Jerusalem that there were days coming *apparently in the lifetime of them and their children* when there would be those who would say to the mountains "Fall on us," and to the hills "Cover us" (Luke xxiii. 30).

At this great crisis the catastrophe is represented as interrupted to secure the safety of God's faithful people (Rev. vii). In the Revised Bible we read that those arrayed in white robes had not merely come out of "great tribulation," but out of "*the* great tribulation." The phrase clearly points to the cruel persecution of the Christians by the fiendish emperor Nero, and to that time of awful sorrow which Jesus had predicted as certain to precede the destruction of Jerusalem, and which as to its severity He had spoken of as unparalleled in the history of the world before or after (Matt. xxiv. 21. Dan. xii. 1.)

The seven trumpets.—There is a brief silence separating the vision of the seven seals from that of the seven trumpets—a pause intimating that the drama is to be unfolded afresh, and that substantially the same series of events is to be made doubly sure by being rehearsed under a different aspect. In accordance with the Old Testament analogy (2 Sam. viii. 2, and Lam. ii. 8) the order to

measure the temple (which at that time was still in existence) and the altar and the worshippers was a token of their impending desolation and destruction. The outer court did not need to be measured, for it was desecrated previously, an armed mob of Gentile Idumeans holding possession of the courts of the temple during the whole forty-two months that the war in Palestine lasted.

Dr. Clement Clemance[1] gives the following summary of Archdeacon Farrar's explanation of the first six trumpets.[2]

FIRST TRUMPET.—Years of burning drought, rains of fire, disastrous conflagrations and earthquakes as those in Lyons, Rome, Jerusalem and Naples (63 to 68 A.D.).

SECOND TRUMPET.—Great calamities connected with the sea and ships, such as those of which the time of Nero furnishes abundant evidence.

THIRD TRUMPET.—The overthrow of Nero, the ominous failure of the Julian line, and the bitterness occasioned thereby.

FOURTH TRUMPET.—Ruler after ruler of the Roman empire and of the Jewish nation died by murder or suicide.

FIFTH TRUMPET.—The star perhaps Nero. The host of locusts denoted demons. "In the period between Christ's resurrection, and the fall of Jerusalem, the Jewish nation acted as if possessed by seven thousand demons" (Stier).

SIXTH TRUMPET.—The army of the horsemen denotes the swarms of Orientals who gathered to the destruction of Jerusalem in the train of Titus, and the overwhelming Parthian host which was expected to avenge the ruin of Nero.

"Observe in ix. 10, a cryptographic allusion to the Parthian cavalry. The horses are said to be like scorpions, and to have stings in their tails, referring to the famous practice of the Parthian horsemen, who, when pursued after charging,

[1] Pulpit Commentary (REVELATION: p. 239).

[2] "Early Days of Christianity:" ii. 261-270.

would turn and fly, all the time shooting their arrows behind them."[1]

Seven mystic figures (Ch. xii.-xiv.)—In the woman clothed with the sun we have a symbol of the persecuted Jewish-Christian Church of the first century. The man-child seems to typify such of the members of that church as were martyred. The devil in the hope of doing them deadly injury instigated their enemies to murder them. But evil was overruled for good, and death proved the means of introducing them into the presence of the Father. They were caught up to God and His throne. In that which afterwards befell the woman herself, we have a representation of what happened to the members of the Hebrew Christian Church who survived the malice of their enemies. Our Lord had given an earnest warning to His disciples that when they saw Jerusalem surrounded with armies they were to escape from the city in utmost haste (Matt. xxiv. 15-18). Relying on statements of Josephus (Wars 2. 20; 3. 3. 3), it has been generally admitted that the Christians carried out their Master's instructions, and at the outbreak of the Jewish War availed themselves of an opportunity to flee across the mountains (ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη) to the desert of Perea beyond Jordan. This exactly tallies with the statement that the woman—symbolising the surviving members of the Hebrew

[1] H. R. Haweis. "The Story of the Four:" p. 182.

Christian church — hastily sought refuge in the wilderness, where *for the whole duration of the war in Palestine*—1260 days or three years and a half —she remained, cared for by God. *The total silence of history as to what subsequently became of these Jewish Christians finds an adequate explanation in the belief that at the end of the siege they were caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and were conveyed away from earth to the heavenly home prepared for them in the Father's house of many mansions* (1 Thess. iv. 17).

CHAPTER XI.

The Revelation (*Continued*).

The beast and its number.—The next mystic figure is that of the first wild beast (Rev. xiii. 1-10):—the Roman emperor Nero, a man whom Paul speaks of by the similar name of "the Lion" (2 Tim. iii. 17). A minute parallel exists between the description of the beast in Revelation and the character of Nero as depicted in secular history. Says Dr. Farrar (Early Days of Christianity, 5.28.5): "Beyond all shadow of doubt or uncertainty, the Wild Beast from the sea is meant as a symbol of the emperor Nero. Here, at any rate, St. John has neglected no single means by which he could make his meaning clear without deadly peril to himself and the Christian Church. He describes this Wild Beast by no less than sixteen distinctive marks, and then all but tells us in so many words the name of the person whom it is intended to symbolize." Among the most striking proofs of the identification are (1) Nero's world-wide power and dominion, (2) his assumptions of the prerogatives of deity, (3) his cruel persecution of the Christians for 42 months (from the end

of 64 A.D. to the middle of 68 A.D.), and (4) his own violent death followed by the belief that widely prevailed that he was not really dead, but would ere long emerge from some secret hiding place. It is also well-known that in the absence of arithmetical figures the Jews attach a numerical value to the letters of the alphabet. Hence it is a fact full of interest and significance that 666, the number of the wild beast, is the value when added together of the Hebrew letters which go to express the emperor's name. For Nero to have been more plainly spoken of would have been needlessly to compromise the Christian Church.

The harvest and the vintage.—We have here a remarkable parallel to the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. xiii. 30) of which Christ had declared the harvest would take place *at the end of the age, i.e.*, at the end of the Jewish dispensation. Here, however, there is a twofold division, the harvest of the land (*or* earth) corresponding to the reaping of the wheat and its reception into the garner, whilst the cutting down of the vine and the gathering of the vintage and the treading of the winepress of the wrath of God is wholly a work of judgment and destruction, corresponding to the binding together and burning of the tares. In the 1600 furlongs (Rev. xiv. 20), we have a reference to *the geographical length of Palestine*—200 miles from north to south.

Babylon probably Jerusalem.—In a profoundly interesting section of "the Parousia" Dr. Russell has argued forcibly against the traditional identification of the Babylon of Rev. xvii-xix with Rome, pagan or papal. He has given striking reasons for adopting the remarkable conclusion that "the great harlot sitting on a scarlet colored beast" and drunken with the blood of saints and martyrs[1] is the faithless city of Jerusalem, which had so persistently violated the marriage covenant that existed between herself and her God. It is to be remembered in this connexion that Peter (Acts iv. 26) applies to the rulers of Palestine the term "kings of the land (or earth)," which occurs in Rev. xvii. 18.

The binding of Satan.—In Rev. xx. the acts of binding the dragon and of raising the saints must fall within the term 'shortly' by which the Revelation is repeatedly limited. Then follows an exceedingly long period of time spoken of as "a thousand years." This in the nature of the case goes beyond the limits of 'shortly' and extends into the distant future. During this period the imprisonment of Satan continues, and the saints in heaven reign with Christ over the earth, *and doubtless also over the human race in the invisible world of*

[1] "Ye are sons of them that slew the prophets," said Jesus to the Jews (Matt xxiii. 31). "Behold I send unto you prophets; some of them shall ye kill and crucify" (verse 34). "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *which killeth the prophets* and stoneth them that are sent unto her" (verse 37). "*It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem*" (Luke xiii. 33).

spirits (Matt. xxviii. 18). There is no reason why we should not accept the narrative in its entirety, and the clear statement of Rev. xx. 3 that for the whole period of "a thousand years" Satan was to be deprived of all ability to deceive the nations. This is far more than a declaration that for the term of his imprisonment the power of the dragon is partially restricted and repressed. Let us therefore thankfully accept the fact that at the coming of the Kingdom of God in 70 A.D. the devil was dethroned and placed under complete restraint; and that for the last eighteen hundred years (a part only of that exceedingly long period which in accordance with the usages of everyday life is spoken of in a general way as "a thousand years") *he* at any rate has been deprived of all power to tempt and injure the human race. Perplexing as this statement may appear to some, it becomes intelligible and credible when we remember that in Scripture Satan is represented as being only the head and chief of a vast confederacy of rebel spirits. It is not until the end of the Millennial Kingdom (when Christ will surrender the Kingdom to God, even the Father) that our Lord will have put *all* His enemies under His feet, and have abolished *all* rule and *all* authority and power.[1] If the devil was bound and imprisoned in the abyss at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, then, ever since that period, his work of tempting

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25.

and injuring mankind has had to be *done for him by subordinate evil spirits.* The fact that they have only been able to do it with inferior power and inferior knowledge and skill, and inferior courage (for now that their ringleader is vanquished they realise that utter defeat awaits them also) helps to account for the vast improvement in the moral condition of the world which has undoubtedly taken place since the introduction of Christianity. When the apostles cast out evil spirits Christ saw that the work which they were thus helping to begin would be consummated in the expulsion of the devil himself from heaven (Rev. xii. 10), and in this his subsequent imprisonment in the abyss. Probably it was to the event of Rev. xii. 10 that our Lord prophetically referred when He declared that He declared that He had seen Satan as lightning fall from heaven (Luke x. 18). Possibly also the same transactions were contemplated by Christ as destined to come to pass in the near future, when just before His crucifixion He declared: "Now is *a* judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John xii. 31, margin Revised Bible). Be this as it may, it is at least certain (Rom. xvi. 20) that if Paul wrote with divine authority Satan was bruised beneath the feet of the primitive Christians shortly after the epistle to the Romans was written (58 A.D.) Our Lord, also, taught that among the first steps to be taken in His

work of delivering man from the power of evil must be the casting out of the strong one who for so long had had dominion over the world; and that the expulsion of evil spirits by Himself and His apostles was a sure indication of the near approach of the time when Satan would be dethroned, and the Kingdom of God and of heaven set up over the earth. "How can one enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house. If I by the spirit of God cast out demons, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you" (Matt. xii. 29, 28).

The first resurrection.—From Daniel xii. 2 ("Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt") we have reason to believe that a partial resurrection of the wicked (that is of unbelievers who were ripe for judgment) took place at the same time as the resurrection of the saints recorded in Rev. xx. 4. It is true that neither here nor in John v. 25 have we any mention of it, but (since mere silence proves nothing one way or the other) the omission is not fatal to the identity of this event with that recorded in Daniel. Nor does the statement even of Rev. xx. 5 contradict the supposition. That verse merely teaches that no one else from among those who were dead at that time *had any share in a resurrection to eternal*

life until the exceedingly long period expressed by the term "a thousand years" was finished.

It is clear that we are now living in the midst of the Millennium. * At the present moment the ringleader of evil is under complete restraint, and the saints in heaven are reigning with Christ over the whole human race. None of the events described in the Apocalypse after the distinct statement of this long interval of time can be included in the term "shortly," by which all the other contents of the book are expressly limited. Thus in xx. 12 we have a description of a world-wide judgment yet to come (also solemnly predicted by Jesus in John v. 29) when the dead, great and small, shall stand before the throne and be judged according to their works. In the account of the new heavens and the new earth, and of the descent to earth of the holy city new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, we have a prophecy of that blessed consummation of all things, one day to be realised, when all sin and sorrow shall have ceased, and when the will of our righteous and loving God will be done on earth as perfectly as it is now done in heaven.

*For further discussion of the question of the Millennium, the reader is referred to the preface to the second edition.

CHAPTER XII.

Consequences.

The light which the past second advent throws upon the problem of Future retribution has already been indicated. Other far-reaching consequences result, some of which it now remains to suggest and enumerate.

Our relation to political and social movements.—That which lies nearest to the heart of God our Father is the welfare and happiness of the masses of the people in this and every other country. The Almighty Himself is on their side against all selfish privilege and all unjust and iniquitous laws. It must be so, for He hates unrighteousness, and He sent His Son to be the Saviour not merely of a few individuals but of the whole world. The poorest, the vilest, the most ignorant of our fellow-men are in very deed *our brothers for whom Christ tasted the shame and the agony of death.* And yet there are thousands of Christian people of undoubted sincerity and earnestness who deliberately and on principle hold aloof from all political and social movements. They

declare that the condition of things on this earth is certain to go from bad to worse. It is quite useless, they assert, to attempt to make the world any better. All our hopes for humanity should be centred on a still future second advent! Christ Himself, they would have us believe, is coming ere long to take the supreme control into His own hands and establish an earthly Kingdom of God. And meantime, amid the awful sin and misery and oppression that are around us—while strong men and delicate women and innocent children agonize and die by the thousand beneath the crushing weight of evils which wise legislation and united Christian effort would do much to diminish or destroy—we, forsooth, may rightly sit with folded arms and upturned eyes awaiting His arrival! And this too notwithstanding the fact that according to the common belief His advent has already been postponed for nearly two thousand years, and therefore, for aught we know, may be postponed for two thousand years longer!

This *religious quietism* is founded on a huge blunder. The second coming of Christ on which so many false hopes have been based is now an event of the remote past. The belief that it is still future is equivalent to an unintentional denial of the truth of some of the plainest words He ever uttered. The sovereignty of the Lord Jesus and His saints was established over the earth more

than 1800 years ago. *He must continue to reign until He hath put all His enemies under His feet* (1 Cor. xv. 25). God's Kingdom has come. It is now our solemn duty and our most glorious privilege to claim our share in all political and social movements which have for their object the welfare of our brothers for whom Christ died. He wants to make use of us in diminishing and destroying the evils that abound in the world. Whatever of time or of money, of strength or of influence we may possess, it is for us to place it all at the absolute disposal of Jesus Christ, for the benefit of our fellow-men. Thus we shall become co-workers together with Him in causing the will of God to be done on earth even as it is done in heaven. Thus we shall hasten the day when He will surrender the Kingdom to God even the Father—and GOD shall be ALL IN ALL (1 Cor. xv. 24).

The gain to the cause of Christ and of humanity would be enormous if the religious earnestness of all His followers were to run in earthly and mundane channels.

The early date of the New Testament.—In the fact of the past second advent we have a sure proof of the genuineness and early date of the books of the New Testament. It is generally admitted that after the destruction of Jerusalem belief in the immediateness of Christ's return to the earth began

to grow obsolete. It is at least certain that the many varied statements to be found in the gospels and epistles predicting that His return would take place within the lifetime of His contemporaries have been persistently ignored by the church from that time to the present. These predictions run absolutely counter to the beliefs on the subject that have prevailed ever since the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore they cannot have been the invention of a later age. And if the predictions are genuine and authentic the books in which they are contained must be genuine and authentic too.

The divinity of Jesus.—A conviction of Christ's divine nature and a belief in His past second advent confirm and strengthen each other. If, to begin with, we believe that He was in an absolutely unique sense the Son of God, this leads to supreme confidence in His words whether or not they are supported by human testimony after the event. To all who accept His divine authority His predictions are merely *history anticipated!* To such Christian believers no event of the past is more sure than the fact that the Lord Jesus personally and visibly returned to the earth at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. He Himself promised to do so, and in spite of the silence of history they know that *He must have kept His word!*

On the other hand, to begin with, we may be sceptical as to Christ's divinity. Yet, even then,

the known fulfilment of so many of His predictions establishes His supernatural foreknowledge, and becomes a reasonable guarantee for the fulfilment of the whole. We know from Josephus and others that thirty years beforehand Jesus was able to predict many of the events which preceded and accompanied the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore He cannot have been mistaken when He solemnly went on to declare that at the end He Himself would be personally present and actually seen. This conviction is likely to be followed by faith in His divine nature. To anyone who believes in the past second advent, Christ will no longer be a mere man, however beautiful His character and however sublime His teaching. God Himself judges no man but has committed all judgment unto the Son, that all may honour the Son *even as* they honour the Father (John v. 23).

"Where are we now?"—It is at once evident that the past second advent vastly changes the aspect of the New Testament. Most of the predictions uttered by Jesus and His apostles have already been fully and exhaustively realised. This at first sight may appear very perplexing. Yet, unfamiliar and unwelcome though the truth may prove, the fact must be faced that to us the latter half of the Bible is mainly a record of what is now the past—a portion thereof having been given in the form of predictions before the event. *It does*

not on that account lose its value and significance for us. The Scriptures as a whole have simply to be viewed, more emphatically than ever, as having originally been a Jewish book. They contain, among other things, a complete history of God's dealings with His chosen people from the call of Abraham down to their destruction as a settled nation. They exhibit to every succeeding generation the awful consequences of rejecting the divinely-appointed Saviour, and the unspeakable blessedness of those who truly love and obey Him. Truly saintly and consecrated believers of the apostolic age formed the church of the first-born. Of His own will He brought them forth that they should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures (James i. 18). By His kindness in Christ Jesus to the Church of the first-born, God has made manifest to all succeeding ages the exceeding riches of His grace (Ephes. ii. 7).

It is true that our curiosity as to the details of the future is ungratified. Some may impatiently enquire—"Then what have we left?" The reply is that we still know sufficient for our salvation, and have within our reach all the resources we need for living a useful and Christlike life, and dying a peaceful and triumphant death. Upon our acceptance there is pressed the unspeakable privilege of belonging to the Church of the later-born. By laying hold of the almighty grace of God, we may

grow so faithful to duty and so Christlike in character that for us there shall be no real death and no judgment. This is so because the man who is made thus truly and vitally one with the Redeemer comes not into judgment, but already has passed out of death into life (John v. 24). Otherwise we shall have our place in the world-wide resurrection and world-wide judgment of which we have definite announcements in John v. 29 and Rev. xx. 11.[1]

[1] The expression "*a better resurrection*" (Heb. xi. 35) is very noteworthy. The ancient Jews believed that man exists in three or four successive places or conditions. (1) EARTH. (2) HADES, or the intermediate state, which has PARADISE as one of its departments. (3) The final states of HEAVEN for the good, and GEHENNA for the bad. The Lord Jesus Christ has proved to us the truth of this Jewish belief by Himself adopting and teaching it. To pass from one of these places or conditions may simply mean *to rise to life in another!* Hence there are probably six kinds of ἀνάστασις or resurrection. (1) *From earth to Hades.* It was in this sense that Christ proved the resurrection when arguing with the Sadducees (Matt. xxii. 31; Mark xii. 26; Luke xx. 37). Jehovah was still the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore these men were still alive in the intermediate state. (2) *From Hades to earth.* The following instances of resurrection are of this sort: the two young men raised to life by Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings xvii. 22; 2 Kings iv. 34), the man whose dead body touched the bones of the prophet (2 Kings xiii. 21), the ruler's daughter (Matt. ix. 25), the widow's son at Nain (Luke vii. 15), Lazarus (John xi. 44), Dorcas (Acts ix. 40) and Eutychus (Acts xx. 12). (3) *From Hades,* or Paradise, *to heaven.* In the New Testament this is distinguished by the name of the First resurrection (Rev. xx. 5). Saints of the highest rank who had previously left the earth and had remained in Paradise (the outer court or garden of heaven) until the coming of the Kingdom of God in 70 A.D. passed with Christ at the second advent through the veil into the most holy place—the innermost sanctuary of heaven itself. This was *the resurrection from among the dead* which the apostle Paul passionately desired to share in (Phil. iii. 11). It had been expressly predicted by Christ in John v. 25. (4) From Daniel xii. 2 ("Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and *some to shame and everlasting contempt*") it is probable that a resurrection of the wicked also took place at the second advent; and that some men who had previously passed from earth to Hades, having proved themselves utterly and therefore *irrecoverably* bad, now passed *from Hades to Gehenna* into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt xxv. 41), and were completely destroyed. (5) From the time of the second advent onwards truly saintly and approximately Christlike believers enjoy a special privilege. For them the intermediate state has been abolished. In their case, resurrection means passing immediately at death *from earth to heaven itself.* (6) It is an awful thought that even in this brief mortal life

We have revealed to us AN UNCHANGEABLE GOD; AND AN UNCHANGEABLE SAVIOUR (the Ruler and the Judge of men). UNCHANGEABLE PRINCIPLES OF RIGHT AND WRONG are also laid down in the New Testament which we shall find it blessed to observe, and shall neglect at our deadly peril. "Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yea of Gentiles also; if so be that God is one, and He shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith" (Rom. iii. 29-30). "A righteousness of God hath been manifested—even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus unto all that believe; for there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 21, 22). "For the Scripture saith, *Whosoever* believeth on Him shall not be put to shame, for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek (*i.e.*, *Gentile*); for the same Lord is Lord of all and is rich unto *all* that call upon Him, for *whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. x. 11-13).

A child does not need to be informed what his parents will do to-morrow. *He only needs to be able to trust them.* A servant does not need to be informed what his master will do to-morrow. *He only needs to know that his master is a good man and one who can be trusted.* And the supreme need of

some men may prove themselves utterly and therefore *irrecoverably* bad. If there be such, it is possible that their final judgment follows at once the death of their bodies, and that they pass without further delay *from earth to Gehenna.*

humanity is not to be informed of the details of the future, but to be able to put absolute confidence in GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY and in JESUS CHRIST HIS ONLY SON. History repeats itself, and God is ever repeating Himself. He always *distinguishes* between a man's faults and the man himself. His attitude of severity towards sin, and of long suffering pity and forbearance towards all but the most hardened and hopeless of sinners is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It will be our own fault, therefore, if through failure to put ourselves into direct personal relations with our Creator, and failure to study the Bible and the life of Christ who is the express image of the Father, we remain ignorant of the character of the God with whom we have to do.

The Millennium. — The word Millennium denotes the "thousand years" of Rev. xx. 3, 4, during which the dethroned ringleader of evil is placed under restraint, and the saints reign with Christ. It stands for an exceedingly long period which began at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (*i.e.*, soon after the book of the Revelation was written), and has not yet terminated. The reign of the saints with Christ is therefore not *on* but *over* the earth, the Greek word ἐπί being capable of either translation. "Millennium" is thus only another name for the "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of heaven," meaning by these phrases

not merely the sovereignty of Christ over the human race, but the sovereignty of Christ and His saints. *The near approach of the Millennium was unceasingly insisted upon throughout the New Testament.* John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles, all agreed in solemnly proclaiming that the Kingdom was *at hand;* and we confidently believe that it was established in heaven over the earth in 70 A.D.*

From 1 Cor. xv. 25 ("He must reign till He hath put all His enemies under His feet"), we know that the whole duration of the Millennial Kingdom intervenes between Christ's second advent and the *end* of that Kingdom when He will surrender it to the Father. "Christ the first-fruits, then (*i.e.*, *afterwards*) they that are Christ's at His coming. Then (*afterwards*, or later on) cometh the end." Compare the intervals and successive stages denoted by the word "then" in Mark iv. 28: "First the blade, *then* the ear, *then* the full corn in the ear."

*For further discussion of the question of the Millennium, the reader is referred to the preface to the second edition.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONSEQUENCES (*Continued*).

Our relation to the Kingdom of God. The first resurrection continuous in its results. Death is to us what the second advent was to the first Christians.—In 70 A.D. *the condition of the really saintly believer immediately after death* became more blessed than it had been at any previous period of the world's history. Abraham "saw" the day of Christ's kingly triumph and was glad (John viii. 56), but died ere it came. The other Old Testament saints also "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar" (Heb. xi. 13). From the time when these servants of God left the earth, until the coming of the King and of the Kingdom in 70 A.D., they remained in Paradise, the garden or outer court of heaven. Paradise bears the same relation to heaven itself as the Holy place in the earthly tabernacle and temple did to the Holy of holies. The Old Testament saints had been there in a state of imperfect sanctification and imperfect happiness; for *apart from the believers of*

the primitive Christian church it was not possible for them to be made perfect (Heb. xi. 39, 40).[1] Jesus was the first human being to penetrate through the veil, and stand as man's representative in the innermost sanctuary of heaven. In 70 A.D. He returned to take the saints of previous ages from the intermediate state of Paradise, and introduce them (along with the living saints who had been caught up to meet Him in the air) into the presence of their God and Father.[2] *From that day onward*, truly consecrated Christians have had at death a great advantage over their predecessors. A peculiar blessedness belongs to the dead who die in the Lord *from henceforth* (Rev. xiv. 13). In their case there is no delay, but they enter at once the innermost sanctuary of heaven and enjoy at once the full rest and inheritance that await the people of God. Since the Kingdom is already in existence, having been established in heaven in 70 A.D., the probability is that ever since it has been receiving constant accessions to its numbers by the transference from earth, at death, of really saintly and

[1] Concerning the complete salvation which came to earnest and watchful members of the primitive church at the revelation of Jesus Christ, the ancient prophets had sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace which was then to come; searching *what time* and *what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point to*, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and *the glories which were to follow*. And to them it was revealed that *not unto themselves but to the believers of the primitive Christian church* did they minister those things. See 1 Peter i. 7-12.

[2] Possibly these Old Testament saints were the "other sheep" of whom Christ said: "Them also must I *bring*, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (John x. 16).

consecrated believers ; *the crown of glory hereafter being the reverse side of the cross truly and manfully carried here for Christ, and having no possible existence in separation therefrom.* In that case, death, which in the nature of the case is certain to come to us ere "this generation" passes away and may come at any moment, bears to us the same relation as the second advent did to the primitive Christians. The question of our admission to the Kingdom of heaven (as joint-heirs with Christ) or our eternal exclusion therefrom depends on whether or not, at the time the summons comes to us, we are living earnest and prayerful lives. When Christ's body lay in the grave, it is certain that all the powers of evil—*the spiritual hosts of wickedness*, Paul calls them—would be leagued together in the effort to prevent Him from rising. Hence, in the New Testament, our Lord's resurrection is represented as an act of triumph not only over Hades and the grave, but also over him that had the power of death—that is, the devil (Heb. ii. 14). And this twofold victory Christ achieved not for Himself only but also for His faithful people in every age. At the second advent and first resurrection the primitive saints *shared in it to the very utmost*, and had death and all the powers of evil put for ever beneath their feet. This is a pledge of what is possible for us. Whether when we leave this world we attain to the same great joy and the same perfect

deliverance will depend on the sort of lives we have been leading. *Here is a lesson of solemn significance for each of us.* If at death we are found faithful and true, *then we shall be exempt from Hades and the intermediate state*, and have an entrance into the Kingdom itself immediately and abundantly administered to us. Otherwise we shall have sold for the passing pleasures of earth the birthright which is ours as sons of God, and we shall be excluded from the innermost sanctuary of heaven.[1]

Christianity in its primitive purity and simplicity.—We see the necessity for going back to the fountain head of our religion and drawing a broad line of demarcation between the Christianity of Jesus and His apostles and that of subsequent ages. There was ground for the anxiety of the apostle Paul when he said: "I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 3). At the heart of every ecclesiastical system since the destruction of Jerusalem has lain an enormous error —a denial of some of the plainest words that Christ ever spoke. Degeneracy in life and doctrine was not merely something which arose within the church in the course of the third and fourth centuries.

[1] Compare the exclusion from Canaan of the Israelites who came out from Egypt (Numbers xiv. 23, 29). "I desire to put you in remembrance how that the Lord having saved a people out of Egypt *afterward destroyed them that believed not*" (Jude 5).

Already in the lifetime of the apostles a great falling away from the faith had taken place (1 John ii. 19). *The misdeeds and doctrinal errors of the professedly Christian church of the last 1800 years* are partly explained by the fact that (except in so far as it was influenced by the survival, for a time, of the apostle John) it has been the successor, and, to a large extent, the spiritual representative, of *the foolish virgins* —those primitive believers who failed to watch and pray in anticipation of their Master's return, and who stand condemned from the very fact that they were left behind on earth when the Lord took the wise virgins home to heaven.

The Sabbath.—The coming of the Christ at the destruction of Jerusalem was the consummation of a great epoch in the history of the world. The Mosaic dispensation then terminated, and the special forms and rules of the Mosaic law for ever passed away, the eternal principles of right and wrong, which it had embodied, alone surviving under the changed circumstances. This explains the transference of the Sabbath from the end of the week to the beginning. The obligation to observe one day's rest in seven is written deep in the necessities of human nature, and will endure so long as the world lasts.[1] But there is nothing inherently right or wrong in observing any one particular day rather

[1] Works of mercy, however, and of real necessity are an exception to the general rule (Matt. xii. 1-13).

than another. During the Jewish dispensation the enduring principle found temporary form and expression in the command to observe the end of the week. The choice of the seventh day served to remind the Jews of God's cessation from the work of creation, and to point forward to that Sabbath rest in heaven into which His faithful people would enter when the Christ should come to establish His Kingdom (Heb. iv. 11). At the second advent, that Sabbath rest was realised by the primitive saints, and it still continues in existence. At the same time, *all that was temporary and arbitrary in the Mosaic law was formally, and for ever, abrogated.* There was nothing to indicate that the seventh day must still be kept as the Sabbath. *Yet the obligation to observe one day of rest in the week remained, and will remain to the end of time.* The destruction of Jerusalem made it manifest that the observance of the Mosaic law, in its entirety, had become an impossibility. Christians, therefore, doubtless felt themselves at full liberty to observe their weekly rest on the day that reminded them of their Master's resurrection from the grave, and of the descent of the Holy Spirit from heaven. Further, under the Jewish dispensation, arbitrary and external distinctions had existed by which some men, some places, and some seasons were less (or more) holy than others. But the coming of the Christ to terminate that dispensation proves that all such

arbitrary and external distinctions were then swept away. Henceforth, standing as we do, each moment, in the immediate presence of the risen and living Jesus, to whom the whole of our time belongs, we are under a solemn obligation to keep holy seven days in the week.

Why have miracles ceased? The exceptional character of the apostolic age.—The great truth for which we contend emphasises the exceptional character not only of the Jewish dispensation but also of the period that intervened between Christ's first and second advents. God's elect people who were to form the church of the first-born (Heb. xii. 23; James i. 18) were to be gathered out from among all nations *in the lifetime of a single generation.* To effect this result the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost in an altogether abnormal manner and measure. The gift of prophecy, the gift of tongues, and the power to work miracles, abounded among primitive believers (1 Cor. xii. 8-10; xiv. 26). *The Lord confirmed the word by the signs that followed* (Mark xvi. 20). In 1 Cor. xiii. 8. ("Love never faileth; but whether there be prophecies they shall be done away; whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away") Paul definitely taught that these wonders were not to prove permanent, and (verse 11) that even while they lasted, compared with the realisation of

perfect love to God and perfect love to our fellow men, they were like the attainments of childhood compared with those of full manhood. Accordingly there can be but little doubt that Christ's advent at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem to receive into the Kingdom the church of the firstborn, terminated an altogether exceptional state of things which had prevailed since the day of Pentecost, and caused these abnormal miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit to cease.

Faith healing and prayer.—This fact gives the reason why in these days 'the prayer of faith' although never without a rich reward does not always avail to restore a sick man to health, even when he is anointed with oil in the name of the Lord.[1]

So also with respect to prayer generally. Regard for truth compels us to recognise the *absolutely unlimited* nature of some of the promises given by our Lord to His apostles. Again and again He assured them that *whatsoever* they might ask the Father in His name, they would be certain to receive.[2] It is true that, in every age, believers

[1] "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins it shall be forgiven him" (James v. 14-15).

[2] "And *all* things *whatsoever* ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. xxi. 22). "*All* things *whatsoever* ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them" (Mark xi. 24). "*Whatsoever* ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, that will I

have discovered, within their own experience, the blessed results that come from persistent prayer when it has been accompanied by faith in God's goodness and wisdom. They have had reason to give thanks for the peace and guidance and strength which have become theirs as the direct answer to petitions presented in Christ's name, beside the granting of much else that they have asked for. Yet it is clear that, unless we make certain qualifications rendered necessary by the difference in the circumstances of the case, we who live outside the apostolic age cannot rightly claim the full fulfilment of this particular form of the promise. We may ask, and we do ask, for many foolish things, hurtful to ourselves or to others, which God in His wisdom denies to us —things which it is probable that the apostles to whom the promise was addressed (enjoying, as they they did, a special and pre-eminent measure of the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit) *would not have sought.*

The Sermon on the mount.—Paul's advice to his converts to abstain from marriage (1 Cor. vii. 26-31) derived its force and significance from the unparalleled distress of the times at which he wrote, and from the fact that the ties which bound his readers to the earth were in many cases destined to be severed, at latest, at the advent of the

do" (John xiv. 13-14). "Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide; that *whatsoever* ye shall ask of the Father in My name He may give it you" (John xv. 16).

Christ a very few years afterwards. And the appropriateness of Paul's refusal to allow women to teach in the church (1 Tim. ii. 12) is at once recognised as having arisen from the special standards of decorum that prevailed in the world at the time he wrote. From *the exceptional and parenthetic character of the apostolic age* it is reasonable also to infer that many authoritative commands recorded in the New Testament only remained in force, in the precise form in which they were given, until the Lord came at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. *They do not, on that account, lose their value and importance for succeeding generations. A new condition of things having arisen, the temporary rule gives place to the enduring principle.* The special form passes away, but the spirit of the command lives and lives for ever. Thus from our Lord's command to His first disciples that they were not to resist illtreatment, but when smitten on the right cheek to turn the other also (Matt. v. 39)—a command which, it is probable, was *literally* understood and obeyed by them—we learn the eternal obligation of curbing anger and resentment, and of never retaliating for retaliation sake. The apostolic communism,[1] and Christ's plain injunction that *those to whom He spoke* were to give to every beggar and lend to all who might

[1] "And all that believed were together, and had all things common. And they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all according as any man had need" (Acts ii. 44-45). "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul. And not one said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts iv. 32).

wish to borrow of them,[1] teach us to recognise in the wants of even the poorest and humblest of our fellow men a continual claim on our sympathy and assistance. The fact that the first Christians were absolutely forbidden to accumulate money or any other form of earthly wealth,[2] and that the young ruler was bidden to part with all that he had and reduce himself to abject poverty,[3] reminds us that no true servant of Christ, in any age, can ever rightly accumulate money for its own sake. Every really consecrated believer, whether rich or poor, must in his heart renounce all for the Saviour, even though the renunciation may not take the outward and visible form in which it was demanded from the young ruler and from others of the early Christians.[4] Paul, again, writing with divine authority, forbade the women of the primitive church to wear jewellery or expensive dresses, or to braid their hair.[5] Under the changed circumstances in which we live, the

[1] "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow o thee turn not thou away" (Matt. v. 42).

[2] "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth*, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also" (Matt. vi. 19-21).

[3] "Sell *all that thou hast*, and distribute to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (Luke xviii. 22).

[4] "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure *to give you the Kingdom. Sell that ye have*, and give alms; make for yourselves purses which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief draweth nigh neither moth destroyeth" (Luke xii. 32, 33).

[5] "That women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works" (1 Tim. ii. 9, 10).

prohibition has doubtless lost something of its force, but it still teaches the duty of simplicity of dress and the avoidance of needless display. Finally, modern preachers when travelling may rightly question whether it be God's will that they should imitate the apostles in making no provision whatever for the journey[1] but simply be satisfied with the food which will come to them in the providence of God.[2] Yet the instructions on the subject, given to the apostles, may well remind us that to the end of time excessive anxiety as to food and dress will always be irreconcilable with childlike confidence in Him who numbers the very hairs of our heads.

[1] *Circumstances alter cases!* On the eve of His death, Jesus said to His disciples: "When I sent you forth without purse and wallet and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. And He said unto them, *But now*, he that hath a purse let him take it, and likewise a wallet, and he that hath no sword, let him sell his cloke and buy one!" (Luke xxii. 35, 36.)

[2] "Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass, in your purses; no wallet for your journey, neither two coats nor shoes nor staff; for *the labourer is worthy of his food*" (Matt. x. 10, Revised Bible).

CHAPTER XIV.

CONSEQUENCES (*Continued*).

The Lord's Prayer.—It seems likely, also, that even in the case of the Lord's Prayer it is the spirit rather than the strict form and letter that is set before us for perpetual imitation. Indeed, the words of Jesus in John xvi. 23, 24 prove that the exact form was not intended to be of permanent obligation. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in My name. *Hitherto ye asked nothing in My name.* Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled." Moreover, by the dethronement and imprisonment of Satan (Rev. xx. 2, 3), and the establishment of the Kingdom of God over the earth in 70 A.D., the early church received speedy answers to the seventh petition as given in the Revised Bible ("deliver us from the evil one"), and the second petition ("Thy Kingdom come"). Having regard to the spirit of the prayer, we may retain and still use both these petitions as given in the Authorised version, although the second has become to us practically identical with the third ("Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven"), and the seventh ("deliver us from evil") differs little from the sixth ("lead us not into temptation").

Lawful variety in Church systems.—A recognition also follows of the comparative insignificance of any particular form of Church organisation. Suppose the Church system that prevailed in New Testament days could be ascertained beyond all controversy—be it Independency, Episcopacy, or Presbyterianism. *No evidence can be adduced to show that this one system was meant to be taken as a model for all time.* The primitive Christians lived in an exceptional and parenthetical period of the world's history. The changed circumstances in which we live justify a departure from apostolic forms, but never from the apostolic spirit. A society of modern Christians may, therefore, rightly adopt any form of Church government and organisation that is not inherently wrong, and which appears to them suited to their needs in the present day.

The sudden break in early Church history. The fate of the apostles. Did Lazarus die a second time?—The fact that Christ's second advent took place in 70 A.D. is the only adequate explanation of the sudden break which then occurred in the records of the Church. In the Acts of the Apostles the story ends abruptly, leaving us uncertain as to the fate of Paul and other prominent Christian workers. A mystery has hitherto surrounded the fate of most of the apostles, vague and untrustworthy legends as to the times and circumstances of their deaths having been all

that was available. But relying on the plain, emphatic and continually-repeated statements of Jesus Christ, there is no longer any room for doubt on the subject. We may conclude, with certainty, that those of the apostles who survived until 70 A.D. were then translated from earth to heaven, with the exception of John who was left behind for a time to be the apostle of the new era. Their Master true to His word (Matt. xxviii. 20) had been WITH THEM ALL THE DAYS as they preached and baptized; and now at the CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE and in fulfilment of another promise (John xiv. 3) He visibly returned to fetch them home to heaven—to that place which He had meantime been preparing for them in the Father's house of many mansions. Thus He verified His solemn prediction that their missionary labours would be cut short by His own personal advent ("Verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel until the Son of man be come." Matt. x. 23).

It has often been a matter of surprise that during His earthly ministry Jesus should have raised from the dead at least three persons (the widow's son, the ruler's daughter, and Lazarus), *only to allow them later on to sink back into the grave.* But no such inference is necessary. All three of these may well have lived until the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and by being then translated from earth to heaven have escaped death and the intermediate state.

Apostolic succession.—The great fact that the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ took place in 70 A.D. is a crowning proof of the shallowness of the theory that any particular class of men can rightly claim to be, in an exclusive sense, the successors of the apostles.

(1) THE WORK OF THE APOSTLES UNIQUE: FULLY ACCOMPLISHED: AND INCAPABLE OF REPETITION. THEIR QUALIFICATIONS AND CREDENTIALS ALSO UNIQUE.—Like John the Baptist, the apostles were mainly sent out into the world to herald the immediate coming of the divine Kingdom, and therefore also of the divine King. "As ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven *is at hand*" (Matt. x. 7). "Into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go out into the streets thereof and say, Even the dust from your city, which cleaveth to our feet, we do wipe off against you. Howbeit know this, that the Kingdom of God *is come nigh*" (Luke x. 9-11). They had also to declare that faith and obedience were the indispensable qualifications for admission to the Kingdom. *And they did not leave unfinished the task committed to them.* They went forth and preached everywhere (Mark xvi. 20), and ere their ministry ceased, the glad tidings of the near approach of the Kingdom of God had been made known unto all the nations (Rom. xvi. 26), and proclaimed in all creation under heaven (Col. i. 23). The work to which they were called was thus

of a unique character, accomplished by them once for all, and *incapable of being repeated in exactly the same form* in succeeding generations. Further the apostles (including Paul, Gal. i. 1, 12) derived their message directly from Jesus Himself. With the exception of Paul, they were qualified for their work by three years[1] of personal friendship with their Lord; and (including Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 1) by having seen Him alive after His resurrection.[2] They had also special supernatural gifts (Mark xvi. 17) and even the power of casting out demons and of raising the dead to life.[3] These special supernatural gifts ceased when their ministry ceased, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. It is also noteworthy that our Lord's promise (Matt. xxviii. 20) to be in a special and exclusive sense 'with' His apostles *extended only to the end of the Jewish age!* It is true that an analogy exists between the work of the apostles and that of Christian preachers of later ages. To all Christian preachers it has been given to proclaim the Saviour's name and to teach that repentance and faith are indispensable qualifications for admission to the

[1] "Ye also bear witness because ye have been with Me from the beginning" (John xv. 27).

[2] "Of the men therefore which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto the day that He was received up from us, of these must one become *a witness with us of His resurrection*" (Acts i. 21, 22).

[3] "Paul, speaking of his own ministry, says "Truly THE SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE were wrought among you in all patience, *by signs and wonders and mighty works*" (2 Cor. xii. 12).

Kingdom of heaven. Yet the ministry of the apostles like that of John the Baptist, is incapable of repetition in precisely its original form, *the Kingdom of God having long ago been established in heaven over the earth.* Moreover none of the alleged successors of the apostles can literally cast out evil spirits and raise the dead to life, as they did, or without suffering injury take up serpents and drink poison (Mark xvi. 17).

(2) THOSE WORTHY TO SUCCEED THE APOSTLES WERE WITHDRAWN FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN ALONG WITH THEM. The claim of any priestly class to exclusively represent the apostles is also completely invalidated by the consideration that the Church of history is the successor and for the most part the spiritual representative of those primitive believers of the second rank who stand condemned from the very fact that, being found lacking in earnestness and watchfulness at the moment of Christ's second advent, they were left behind on earth at a time when their truly saintly and consecrated fellow-Christians were taken away to heaven. Thus even if it were possible for the priestly pedigree to be traced back without a break to the year 70, the most important links in the chain—the links needed to connect it with the apostles themselves—would still be missing. In that year, *on a day and at an hour previously unknown to any but God the Father* (Matt. xxiv. 36), the apostles (with a single exception) and *all*

those worthy to succeed the apostles were suddenly withdrawn from the earth. Hence the priestly pedigree is at best *a chain hanging upon nothing*, for no one asserts that episcopal succession has come simply through John.

(3) THE APOSTLES HAVE NEVER RELINQUISHED THEIR POSITION OF PRE-EMINENCE OVER THE CHURCH. Jesus, with the utmost solemnity, invested His apostles with the very same authority over the church, as that which He Himself had received from the Father. "As the Father hath sent Me, EVEN SO SEND I YOU" (John xx. 21). "He that heareth you heareth Me, *and he that rejecteth you rejecteth Me*, and he that rejecteth Me rejecteth Him that sent Me" (Luke x. 16). Like the Son of man (Mark ii. 10) they had bestowed on them the right and the power to forgive sins.[1] But *the church in heaven and on earth is not two but only one*, and Peter and his fellow-apostles have never ceased to exercise over it the authority committed to them by their Master. A will cannot be proved and the property inherited until the testator is dead.[2] Just as Christ needs no successor to His throne because He is still alive and still occupies it, so none can succeed the apostles in their position of pre-emi-

[1] "Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them. Whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John xx. 22, 23).

[2] "For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force when there hath been death, for doth it ever avail while he that made it liveth?" (Heb. xi. 16, 17).

nence over the church, for the simple reason that these men are at this moment alive in the unseen world, and still have this pre-eminence.

The visible unity of Christendom.—Jesus Christ prayed for perfect union amongst His people, that union which is destined one day to bring about a world-wide recognition of His divine mission. "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me, *that they may be one even as We are.* . . . Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also which believe on Me through their word; *that they may all be one;* even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; *that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me*" (John xvii. 11, 20, 21).

For at least three reasons the fact of the past second advent is calculated to promote the unity of Christendom. (1) Many sects and denominations are largely based on the belief that the second advent is still future. When it is recognised that this belief is a grave error and wholly irreconcilable with the plain teaching of the Lord Jesus, these sects must cease to exist. (2) The past second advent is fatal to the dogma of Apostolic succession which otherwise must for ever prove an insurmountable barrier to the union of the Churches. (3) The light which the great truth for which we contend throws on the New Testament, and the many passages of which it makes the meaning clear beyond reasonable doubt,

will do much to minimise differences of opinion amongst Christian people. For example, there is no longer any room for the controversy between pre-millennarianism and post-millennarianism. The Millennium (or heavenly Kingdom of God) in the midst of which we are living was preceded by Christ's second advent, and will be followed by His third advent. We may therefore readily recognize the elements of truth which existed in what appeared to be conflicting opinions.

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APPENDIX A.

HYMNS OF THE SECOND AND THIRD ADVENTS.*

I.

Church of God, why vainly pining,
For the coming of thy Lord,
Purblind to the clear and shining
Lustre of His faithful word?
Deem not that with voice uncertain
His brave heralds spake to men,
Crying, as uprose the curtain
On the scene—"Christ comes again."

Quickly e'en as these foretold Him,
Quickly as Himself declared,
Did His enemies behold Him
When in glory He appeared;
While His saints, death's slumber breaking,
Soared to meet Him in the air,
At His voice with gladness waking
His immortal Reign to share.

Wherefore, with the faithless servant,
Deem His coming yet delayed;
Of the signs all unobservant
Which He gave thy faith to aid?
Oh, shake off the unbelieving
Spirit which obscures thy gaze,
And with joy the Truth receiving,
Of His Kingdom swell the praise!

*Inserted by kind permission of the author.

To no vague and distant future
Are His victories postponed,
He is reigning in the Present,
Monarch over all enthroned;
His the universal sceptre,
His the government sublime,
All things to Himself subduing,
Now and through all coming Time.

[Tunes: Alla Trinita Beata, Chichester, Falfield, Haydn's Hymn.]

II.

From the outer darkness
Where she long hath lain,
Christ His church is calling
Into light again:
From the clouds of error
Bids her lift her eyes,
And behold His kingdom
Reigning in the skies.

Suddenly, at midnight,
Came He while she slept,
Nor, as He commanded,
Faithful vigil kept.
While the wise and holy
Shared His bridal state,
Shivered the unready
At the closèd gate.

Centuries have vanished
Since the Bridegroom came;
Centuries, out of darkness
Calling on His name,

Christians have been crying,
Loud in praise and song:—
"Wherefore, mighty Saviour,
Tarriest Thou so long?"

But the scales are falling
From the blinded eyes,
Comes the revelation
Messaged from the skies:-
"Cease your piteous outcry!
He for whom ye pine,
Came in power fulfilling
His own word divine;

Came in power triumphant
Conquered, bound in chains,
His inveterate foeman,
And in heaven He reigns
With His saints victorious,
Pledge of that blest day
When, the wide world over,
Men shall own His sway!"

[Tunes. Dublin, Edina, Goschen, Hebron, Holy War, Midian, Panis Celestis, St. Alban's, St. Andrew of Crete.]

III.

He came, the Christ of God,
In lowlihood and pain,
To share our sorrows, bear our load,
The Lamb for sinners slain;
Wrought out His work of love,
Then, victor o'er the grave,
Ascended to the realms above,
Omnipotent to save.

He came the second time,
According to His Word,
Arrayed in majesty sublime
And girt with conquering sword;
His rebels to chastise;
His faithful ones to bless
And raise with Him, beyond the skies,
To reign in righteousness.

Then deep in the abyss
He bound His ruthless foe;
Unsealed the founts of heavenly bliss
To heal the world's dark woe;
While of His reign began
The victories ne'er to cease,
Until to Universal Man
Be given His glorious peace.

Once more He then will come,
Sin, death and hell subdued,
To call His outcast exiles home
To Eden-life renewed;
No want, no curse, no tear,
That state of Perfect Love,
When Earth shall form the image here,
Of God's own Heaven above!

IV. AND V.

"*Great is the mystery of Godliness.*"—I Tim. iii. 16. "*In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is completed the mystery of God according as He evangelised to His servants the prophets.*"—Rev. x. 7.

Hymn aloud the Lord's Evangel!
God's great mystery made complete,
When the voice of the archangel
Ushered in, with pomp most meet,
Christ's appearing in His Kingdom,
Throned upon the judgment-seat.

He who came in want and weakness,
Once our guilt to expiate,
Trod the path of pain with meekness,
Bore with human scorn and hate,
Came the second time in glory,
Charioted in royal state.

Not to urge them to repentance,
And heaven's mercy to disclose,
But to speak their righteous sentence,
Came He this time to His foes,
And exile them from His presence,
Banished to æonian woes.

But His people's whole salvation,
Now in Him was fully wrought,
Made to share His exaltation,
To His Heavenly Kingdom brought,
Reigning with Him o'er the ages—
O what bliss beyond all thought!

Thence proceeds the power unceasing
Vanquishing the works of Sin,
As from year to year increasing
Doth His Gospel gather in
Conquered hearts to Him, their Saviour,
And at length the world shall win!

[Tunes: Oriel and Regent Square.]

O Thou all triumphant Saviour,
Reigning on Thine endless throne,
By enraptured hosts surrounded,
Loved, redeemed and made Thine own,
Far and wide among the nations
Make Thy Gospel fully known!

Lo, Thy church, in error shrouded,
Now for ages long hath pined,
Waiting for the blessed promise
In Thy precious word enshrined;
To the consummated conquest
Of her Great Redeemer blind.

"Wherefore tarries still Thy chariot,
While the weary years go by,
Why art Thou so long in coming?"
This hath been her yearning cry.
Lift the veil, Lord, from her vision,
Cure the blindness of her eye!

Give the mind-enlightening Spirit
To illuminate Thy Word,
Let her comprehend its witness
To the coming of her Lord,
And Thy manifested Godhead,
When the archangel's voice was heard!

So once more Thy glorious Gospel,
Clothed with Pentecostal might,
Shall go forth mankind subduing
To Thy love; and on the night
Of their woe shall rise the morning,
And the world be filled with light.

[Tunes: Oriel and Regent Square.]

VI.

O Thou, of God the Incarnate Son,
Whose reign already hath begun,
Thy throne shall evermore endure,
And Thy dominion stand secure.

When Thou didst come the second time,
Sudden, majestic and sublime,
To visit judgment on Thy foes,
And all Thy saints to meet Thee rose;

Triumphant in that solemn hour,
The kingdom, glory and the power
Thou didst for ever make Thine own,
While Hell's dark empire was cast down.

High in the realms of endless light,
Thy saints, made sinless through Thy might,
Thou didst into a kingdom frame,
Its law Thy love, its bond Thy name;

A kingdom of immortal birth,
To serve as pattern upon earth,
To those whose hearts Thy love should win,
Whose lives Thy grace set free from sin.

Ah! what though tarries still the hour
When it shall shine with full-orbed power;
Though slowly spreads the holy leaven
Of wisdom, in Thy gospel given;

Yet we, in faith and hope, rejoice
That one day wholly to Thy voice
The wide world shall obedient prove,
And Man be perfected in Love.

VII.

Thou didst come in power and glory,
  Closing up one epoch, Lord!
All Thy faithfulness displaying
  To the promise of Thy word.
    Saints and angels
  Saw Thee, heard Thee and adored.

Rising from the dust to meet Thee,
Sprang the crowd of martyrs brave;
All Thy host of true disciples
Who had slumbered in the grave;
And rejoicing
Hailed Thee, Monarch, strong to save.

Then the unbelieving nation
Who had scorned Thy gospel's light,
In their Judge their true Messiah
Knew too late, as into night
Of long darkness
Woe and wail, they fled Thy sight.

Now enthroned in matchless splendour
Saving rule Thou dost maintain;
Powers of evil fly before Thee
While on earth extends Thy reign.
Thine the Kingdom
Till the Slayer, Death, be slain.

Then, once more in might appearing,
Thou shalt come, the world to bless,
Root out sin and woe for ever,
Ill destroy and wrong redress;
New-creating
Heaven and earth in righteousness.

[Tunes: Abbeycombe, Everton, Helmsley, Olivet, Ramah, Rousseau's Dream, St. Austin.]

VIII.

When Thou didst come to claim Thine own,
Thy Church was lapped in sleep profound,
The fickle many loveless grown,
Only the few were faithful found.

These, with Thy risen myriads, soared
To meet Thee in the upper air,
And now, for ever with their Lord,
The glories of Thy Reign they share.

But the apostates left behind,
Unweeting they had missed Thine hour,
Remained to grope with darkened mind
'Mongst clouds of error, shorn of Power.

Then of the gifts of Pentecost,
The lustre waned, grew dim and died;
Nor longer might the Holy Ghost
With a disloyal church abide.

But in these days the light once more
Hath dawned, the long-lost Truth is given;
Lord, with the Truth the Power restore,
The Pentecostal fire from Heaven.

Shew forth the virtue of Thy Name,
As in Thy first disciples shewn;
And let this later Age acclaim
New marvels to Thy Glory done!

W. TIDD MATSON

Sarisbury Green,
near Southampton.

APPENDIX B.

"The End of the Age."—*Matt. xxiv. 3.*

"The common translation 'the end of the world' has been a delusion to many readers of the English Bible, and this could hardly have been otherwise. But it is very strange that so many learned writers, who have properly translated and explained *the consummation of the age*, should have paid so little regard to the question, What *age* is intended? They generally assume without question that the Gospel or Messianic age is meant. But, according to the whole trend of Gospel teaching, that age had not come when Jesus uttered this prophecy. It was only 'near' or 'at hand.' Now the uniform teaching of the New Testament is that Christ's whole ministry fell in the end of the days, or last days of an age. But surely it was not in the end of the Messianic age; that age still stretches on into the indefinite future. It was toward the close of the Mosaic, Jewish or pre-Messianic *eon*, and near the beginning of the Christian *eon*, that God brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel revelation. If, now, Christ and His apostles lived and labored near the close of an *eon*, it is obviously an error to represent them as living in an *eon* which had not yet fully opened in their day, and which they spoke of as about to come.

"Here, then, arises a most important question in this discussion; namely: What was the end of the age of which Jesus spoke? *The age itself was the pre-Messianic;* for the New Testament writers never represent themselves as in the first days, or the beginning of the age, but in its last days. At what point, then, are we to understand 'the end'? Some have said, at the crucifixion, when Jesus said, *It is finished;* others designate the resurrection of Jesus; a few fix upon His ascension. But many teach that the day of Pentecost was the transition point where we must fix the end of the old dispensation and the beginning of the new. To all these theories alike there are two fatal objections. (1) That they are irreconcilable with the statement of Jesus that the Gospel must be first preached unto all the nations before the end. (2) That the apostles, long after the day of Pentecost, represent themselves as living in the last days, and near the end of the age. It is a begging of the whole question, and a dogmatic assumption, to say as Stuart does that the 'last days' in the New Testament denote the period of the Christian dispensation. Such a misuse of the phrase has no warrant in the New Testament. The disciples recognised themselves as in the last times of an *eon* that was to be succeeded by the kingdom and glory of their Lord. At what point, then, shall we understand *the end?* Was there any great crisis to mark such a consummation, or any notable sign by which the end of the pre-Messianic age might be known?

"Is it not strange that any careful student of our Lord's words should fail to understand His answer to this very question? The disciples asked, WHEN shall it be? Jesus proceeded to foretell a variety of things which they would live to see. He also foretold the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem, which we know to have been most accurately fulfilled; no prophecy of the downfall of the Jewish temple and metropolis could have been more explicit. But having told them of all these things, He added: 'When ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that it [or He] is nigh—at the door. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away until all these things be accomplished.' The ruin of the temple and its *cultus* was the great sign which marked the end of the pre-Messianic age."—DR. M. S. TERRY, *Methodist Review*, 1887.

APPENDIX C.

Sir Edwin Arnold on the Imperfection of Man's Ordinary Powers of Perception.

"The undeveloped cannot know the developed, though it may presage and expect it. Bisulphide of Carbon is aware of actinic rays invisible to us. Selenium swells to light which is not felt by our organization. A sensitised film at the end of the telescope photographs a million stars we did not see. The magnetic needle knows and obeys forces to which our most delicate nerves are absolutely dull.

"Birth gave to each of us much, death may give very much more, in the way of subtler senses to behold colours we cannot here see, to catch sounds we do not now hear, and to be aware of bodies and objects impalpable at present to us, but perfectly real, intelligibly constructed, and constituting an organised society and a governed, multiformed state. Where does nature shew signs of breaking off her magic, that she should stop at the five organs and the sixty or seventy elements?

"As the babe's eyes opened from the darkness of maternal safeguard to strange sunlight on this globe, so may the eyes of the dead lift glad and surprised lids to 'a light that never was on sea or land'; and so may his delighted ears hear speech and music proper to the spheres beyond, while he smiles contentedly to find how touch and taste and smell had all been forecasts of faculties accurately following upon the lowly lessons of this earthly nursery!

"Physical science is nothing more than the perceptions of our five bodily senses registered and methodised. But what are these five senses? According to physical science itself, nerves in a certain stage of evolution. *Why then should it be assumed that their account of the universe or of our relations to it is exhaustive and final?* Why should it be assumed that these are the only possible organs of perception, and that no other faculties or means of communication with the universe can ever in the course of evolution be developed in man? Around us are animals absolutely unconscious, so far as we can discern, of that universe which science has revealed to us. A sea anemone, if it can reflect, probably feels as confident that it perceives everything capable of being perceived as the man of science. The reasonable supposition, surely, is that though science, so far as it goes, is real, and the guide of our present life, its relation to the sum of things is not much more considerable than that of the perceptions of the lower order of animals.

"We are enjoined, sometimes with a vehemence approaching that of ecclesiastical anathema to refuse to consider anything that lies beyond the range of experience. By experience is meant the perceptions of our bodily senses, the absolute completeness and finality of which, we must repeat, is an assumption, the warrant for which must at all events be produced from other authority than that of the senses themselves." DEATH—AND AFTERWARDS, pp. 31, 35, 37, 51. [The last two paragraphs are quotations from Prof. Goldwin Smith's *Lectures and Essays*.]

APPENDIX D.

On the phrase 'The Lord's Day.'

"After the fullest consideration of the remarkable expression in Rev. i. 10, we are satisfied that it cannot refer to the first day of the week, but that those interpreters are right who understand it to refer to the period called elsewhere 'the day of the Lord.' There is no example in the New Testament of the first day of the week [Sunday] being called 'the Lord's day,' or 'the day of the Lord.' But the latter phrase is appropriated and restricted by usage to the great judicial period which is constantly represented in Scripture as associated with the Parousia. There is no difference whatever between *ἡ ἡμέρα κυριακή* and *ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου*. Nothing could be more violent than to refer the one phrase to one period or day, and the other to a totally different one. The phrase 'the day of the Lord' had a fixed and definite meaning in the apostolic churches. (See 1 Cor. i. 8; v. 5; 2 Cor. i. 14; 2 Thess. ii. 2; 2 Peter iii. 10.) On the score of the grammar we prefer the construction, 'I was in spirit in the day of the Lord.' That is to say, the Parousia is the standpoint of the Seer in the Apocalypse: a fact which is amply borne out by the contents."—DR. STUART RUSSELL, *The Parousia*, p 372.

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